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Volume 18, No. 10

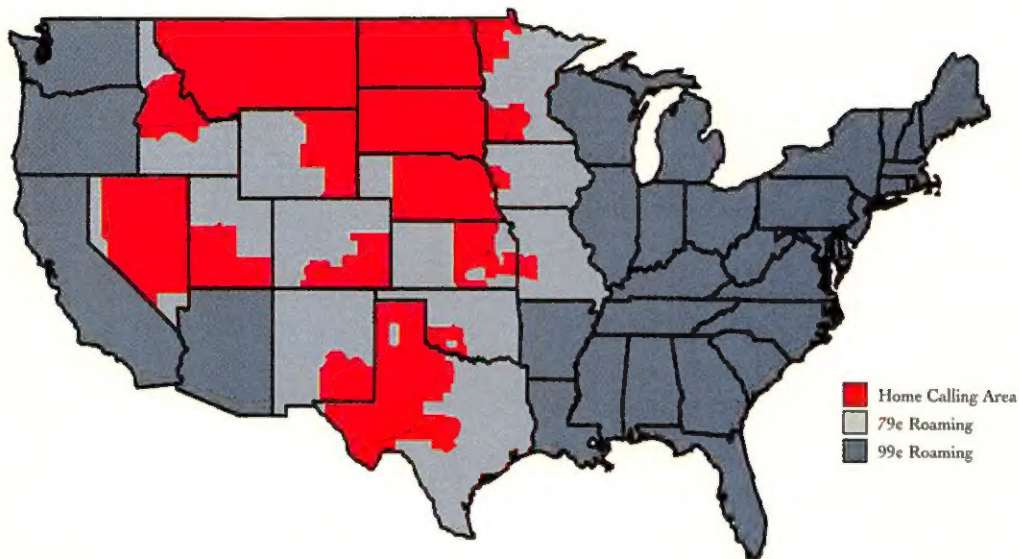
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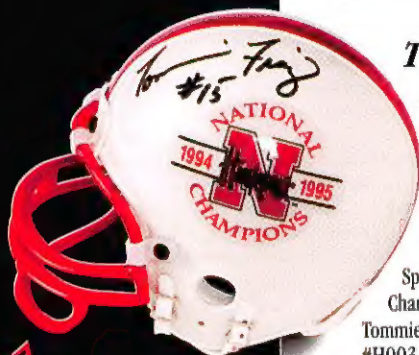


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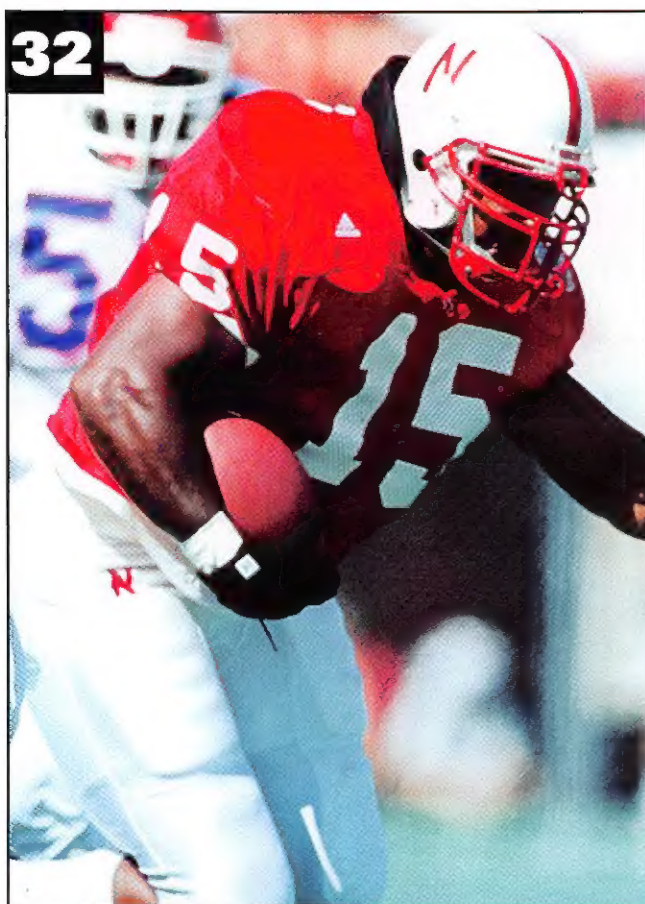
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It wasn't Titanic that Washington's offensive minds were watching in the weeks leading up to Saturday's showdown — it was a video from the Louisiana Tech game.

By Mike Babcock

32 Kings Of Block

The fullback position is not always glamorous, but it may be the most important position in determining the success of Nebraska's powerful offense.

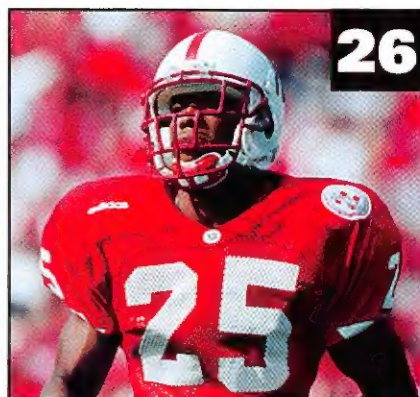
By Mike Babcock

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AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE EDITION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blown Out in Lincoln?

I just returned from Sun Devil Stadium and the Arizona State-Washington game. I'm no ASU fan, but I saw two fine teams, both of whom looked much better than Nebraska when they played Louisiana Tech. It looks like that home streak is in peril. Unless NU's defense, particularly the secondary, improves greatly, it looks like a Washington blowout. I would love to be wrong, but Washington looks much better than NU at this time.

Dan Saunders, Jr.
Tempe, Ariz.

No Problems

So the Huskers had a couple of less than convincing wins. So what? This isn't a problem. The Huskers will improve as the season goes on. Also, they have been hit with injuries. The scout team could go in and beat teams like UAB, but the backup players don't work as much as the starters.

When you mix and match players in different parts of the depth chart, you can lose some chemistry because they don't work together in practice. The Huskers have looked good but not great, but this is nothing to be concerned about right now.

Michael Morris
Denver, Colo.

No Cause For Concern

In the first game against Louisiana Tech, the Huskers' defense allowed almost 600 yards of total offense and gave up an NCAA record 405 yards to Troy Edwards. In the second game against Alabama-Birmingham, the offense rushed for only 236 yards against a team that is trying to climb up from Division I-AA. I know they can't win 77-0 all the time, but will this Nebraska team be able to stack up against Washington and Kansas State?

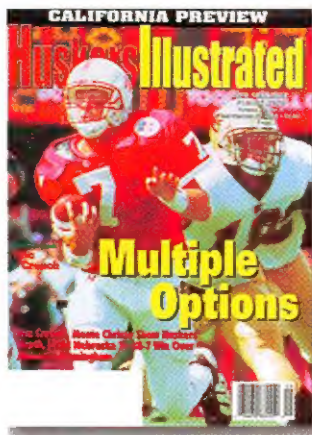
I think that things will click for the Huskers. The offense will be fine. DeAngelo Evans will help the running game when he returns from his injury and a healthy Bobby Newcombe will get into his own groove. Let's not forget that the defense lost two players who were first round selections in the NFL draft. This year's team will be just fine.

Jerry Myers
Lincoln, Neb.

Other Sports

Where is the coverage of non-football sports at Nebraska? I know that during the fall everyone worships at the First Church of Memorial Stadium, but there are other sports going on right now. The basketball team is working to get back to the NCAA tournament in March. The women's soccer and volleyball teams are both serious national championship contenders. They usually don't get more than a token page for all three sports to share. Just remember that the magazine is called *Huskers Illustrated*, not *Huskers Football*.

Devon Johnston
Omaha, Neb.



Truth in Recruiting

The recruiting section of the magazine is always fun to read. I like knowing who the top recruits in the country are and keeping an eye out for them on Saturdays, even if they don't play for the Huskers. One thing I've noticed in the article is that most of the recruits are strongly considering coming to Nebraska, while also having an interest in schools like Florida, Florida State and Michigan.

The good thing about coming to Nebraska is that, while a player may have to redshirt as a freshman, he will get a chance to learn from some excellent coaches and a host of Husker veterans. Just ask Mike Rucker and Chad Kelsay.

Rick Correls
San Jose, Calif.

No Crouch Potato

I know it was just Alabama-Birmingham, but it was great to finally see Eric Crouch run the show for the Huskers. He and Bobby Newcombe are going to be as good, if not better, than the Tommie Frazier-Brook Berringer combo.

Both Newcombe and Crouch are too talented to sit on the bench, but then again, so was Berringer.

Sam Gannon
Wichita Falls, Texas

Got Something To Say?

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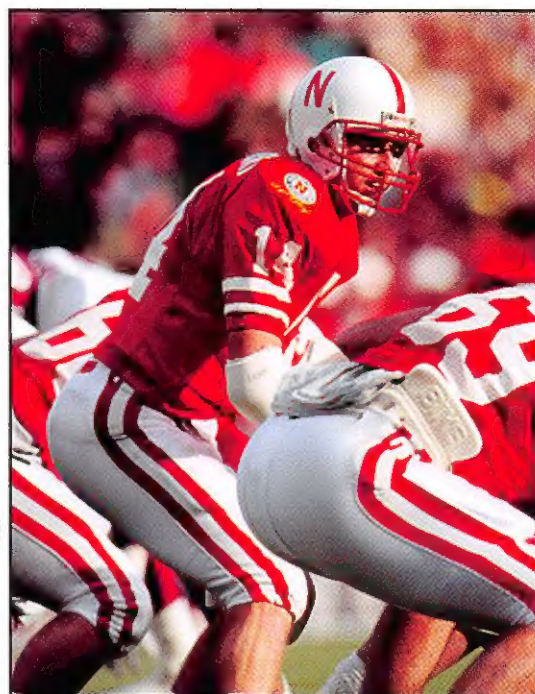
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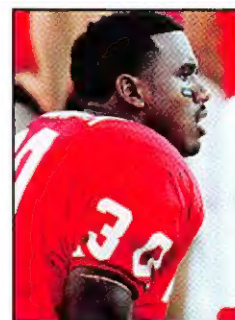
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Sometimes egos get in the way, but plenty of players have proven that a redshirt season can make or break a career

WASTED TIME?



Just as Gerry Gdowski (above) was finding his groove on the field, he ran out of eligibility because he didn't redshirt as a freshman. This year's freshmen, including I-back Dahrren Diedrick (right), will have to wrestle with a similar decision.



Only two of the seven true freshman scholarship players who suited up for Nebraska's opener got in the game, and both were on defense: tackle Jason Lohr and cornerback Keyuo Craver.

Tight end Aaron Golliday, I-back Dahrren Diedrick, defensive back DeJuan Groce, defensive tackle Jeremy Slechta and rush end Chris Kelsay were the others who suited up. Other than Slechta, who got into the Alabama-Birmingham game, the odds are against any of the other four getting to play this season — barring injuries at their positions.

Playing as a true freshman requires not only ability, but also opportunity.

It was that way under Tom Osborne, and it remains that way under Frank Solich.

"If they have a chance to

get considerable playing time, then of course using that first year is well worth it," Solich said in answer to a reporter's question the week before the opener.

"If they don't have a chance to get considerable playing time, then as they get through their career and look back, they might see that (not redshirting as a freshman) was a mistake."

One of the most dramatic examples of that over the last decade or so is the case of quarterback Gerry Gdowski, who elected not to sit out a redshirt season. As a senior in 1989, Gdowski had one of the best seasons ever by a Nebraska quarterback, passing for 1,326 yards and rushing for 925 yards.

He accounted for a

school single-season record 32 touchdowns passing and rushing. Had he redshirted, Gdowski would have had another season of eligibility. But the decision was his.

Now, as then, "no one will be forced to redshirt," Solich said. "That's something we have indicated to them. But it is not a shot in the dark.

"It gets pretty clear, not only to the coaches, but I think it gets very clear to the athletes, too, whether or not they'll have a chance at much playing time."

And without that opportunity, their talents, however extraordinary, can be wasted.

For example, Tony Tata, a freshman from Honolulu, came to Lincoln during the summer to prepare for his first collegiate season. And by all indications, he has the ability to contribute immediately.

The problem is, he plays middle linebacker, a position at which Nebraska is solid with senior Jay

Foreman backed up by sophomore Carlos Polk, junior Ben Buettenback and redshirt freshman Jamie Burrow. At best, Tata would have played on kicking teams and late in blowouts.

Craver and Lohr both play positions at which the Cornhuskers were in serious need of depth. Groce and Mike Demps also are defensive backs, but they were slowed by injuries in preseason practice.

Groce suffered an ankle sprain during two-a-days, and Demps was hampered by a hamstring injury that occurred during the summer. Craver, on the other hand, was able to remain healthy.

"It's been tough on them, really, to display their ability," Solich said of Groce and Demps.

Jon Clanton, like Lohr and Slechta, is a defensive



"No one will be forced to redshirt. That's something we have indicated to them."

— Frank Solich

tackle, a position at which Nebraska is thin. The three competed for back-up jobs during the preseason behind **Steve Warren** and **Jason Wiltz**, and **Lohr** appeared to be a little further along, according to defensive coordinator **Charlie McBride**.

On the other hand, the Cornhuskers went into the season well-stocked at rush end, with **Chad Kelsay**, **Mike Rucker**, **Kyle Vanden Bosch**, **Travis Toline** and **Aaron Wills** returning.

Under different circumstances, freshmen **Chris Kelsay** and **Demoine Adams** might have worked into the rush end mix as **Vanden Bosch** did last season and **Chad Kelsay** did when he was a true freshman.

Justin Smith, another freshman rush end, suffered a shoulder separation during two-a-day practices, ending speculation about whether he would redshirt or not this season.

"The rush ends look like they're all very capable," **Solich** said. "But we have a good group of rush ends, and I don't know that it's necessary that those guys just step on the field this fall."

Three other freshman scholarship recruits were in the same situation as **Smith**.

Tight end **Jon Bowling** also was sidelined by a shoulder separation. Linebacker **Randy Stella** is a partial qualifier and can practice but not play until next season. And running back/defensive back **DeAntae Grixby** won't enroll full-time until second semester because of a shoulder separation.

Another freshman or two still could play if a position is depleted by injuries. The decision to redshirt can be made at any time, including after the season, as long as a player hasn't seen action.

Defensive back **Dion Booker** was included on the travel roster for the Washington game, the third of the season, before officially becoming a redshirt a year ago. "We're not going to try to declare a lot too early," **Solich** said of the Cornhuskers' redshirt intentions this season.

"Some or all of these guys could suit up until it's absolutely necessary to determine whether or not they will play in a game. It could be if we get an injury, they may all of a sudden be playing." ■

Whoa, Nellie!

Senior **Bill Lafleur** had punted only four times prior to this season. So he remembered each one vividly. His first was against Missouri as a redshirt freshman in 1995.

He was proud of it, even though the ball carried only 30 yards.

"There was a gusty wind, probably 35 miles an hour," **Lafleur** said. "I mean, it was right in my face. I thought I hit a pretty good spiral, and it only went 30 yards. But I was actually kind of happy because I had seen guys during the game kicking it 28 yards into the wind."

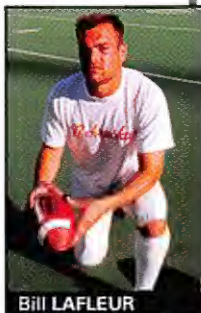
His second career punt at Nebraska is preserved not only in print in the record book, but also on videotape. The Cornhuskers' 1996 opener against Michigan State was televised by ABC, with **Keith Jackson** doing play-by-play, and **Lafleur** punted twice in the fourth quarter.

The first went 53 yards and earned special mention from **Jackson**.

"That was kind of a thrill because somebody had taped it," **Lafleur** said. "I went back and watched it. He (**Jackson**) was kind of saying, it looks like everybody's getting into the game today and here's back-up punter **Bill Lafleur**. He was probably searching through his (player identification) cards."

"The first ball I hit was really good, a real nice spiral, and he kind of said: 'Hey, that's good stuff.' It's kind of funny to hear **Keith Jackson** say that because you grow up watching him call games."

"So that was kind of a big thrill." ■



BILL LAFLEUR

QUICK HITS

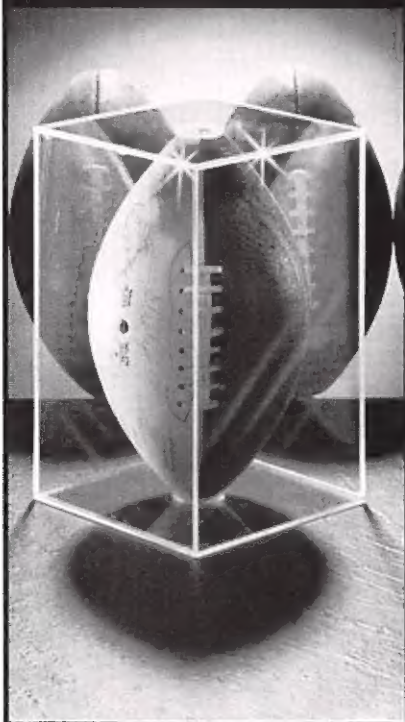
What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

Some Nebraska fans were ready to lynch the Cornhuskers after Louisiana Tech strolled into Lincoln and filled the Memorial Stadium skies with footballs. Kansas State coach **Bill Snyder** can apparently empathize with those uneasy Cornhusker supporters. Asked what his staff would do if the Wildcats gave up the 590 passing yards Nebraska allowed, **Snyder** said, "We might all go out and hang ourselves." **Charlie McBride**, Nebraska's defensive coordinator, has learned in 22 years on the Huskers' staff that a 29-point win isn't always enough to placate the fans. "Around here, a win isn't always a win," **McBride** said. "You can win a game, but if you don't play well on one side of the ball or the other, it becomes a national crisis. I understand what the fans are feeling. It's the nature of the game, and I've gone through this enough to know that this could be a blessing in disguise for us. It could give us more concentration, it could give us an advantage that could make us a better defensive football team in the long run." . . . Senior kicker **Kris Brown** hasn't made many tackles on kickoffs during his career, at least not that he can remember. "The thing is, we put our best people on our special teams," he said. "Our kickoff coverage, throughout my career, has always been the best in the country. We've got a lot of great athletes on kickoff coverage, and most of the time I do a fairly decent job of giving a good kick, which gives our kickoff coverage a chance to get down the field and blow up some people. So I really haven't had to worry about tackles because our coverages are so good." **Brown** doesn't work on his tackling form during practice. "I think it's pretty much instinctive," he said. "I think it's not something you really have to focus on. It's not a technique that you have to be really particular about. It's something you just do." . . . The professional basketball career of former Cornhusker center **Rich King** might have reached its conclusion because of a rash of injuries, the most recent a bulging disc in his back. **King**, who has returned to Lincoln to work on completing his undergraduate coursework, told the *Omaha World-Herald* in June that he was "semi-retired. I guess I am at the point where I have to decide what I'm going to do. Sometimes, I feel like I'm banging my head against a brick wall. The injuries have really sapped a lot of the fun out of it for me." **King** was the 14th pick overall in the 1991 NBA draft and spent four seasons with Seattle SuperSonics, the team that drafted him. He played one season in the CBA, returned to the NBA briefly with the Denver Nuggets, and then returned to the CBA before succumbing to the back problem. . . . If you're looking for **David Murray**'s name on the Cornhusker basketball roster, you won't find it. **Murray**, a 6-foot-9 forward, was set to transfer from Mesa (Ariz.) Community College, but it became apparent he wouldn't complete his degree there until December, so Nebraska backed off. ■



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BIG 12 NEWS

Notes And Quotes From Around The League

UPSTARTS BATTLE TRADITION

Bill Snyder concedes Kansas State might have to do more than just defeat Nebraska if the Wildcats want a share of the national recognition the Cornhuskers have enjoyed the past four decades. Snyder believes longtime powers have an edge in the minds of those who vote in polls and award bids to bowl games.

"Those teams have a distinct advantage over most football teams because of what they have done in the past and their tradition," Snyder said. "Tradition carries a lot of weight in that respect."

"The bottom line is how you perform throughout the course of the season. But everything is in place for those programs to perform extremely well, so I'm envious."

Texas coach Mack Brown knows where Snyder's coming from. As an Oklahoma assistant in 1984, Brown said he saw how the odds were stacked in favor of traditional programs like that of OU.

"We lost to Kansas in midseason," Brown recalled. "Mike Gottfried was the (KU) coach and Kansas was a struggling football team."

"I remember that we (Sooners) dropped from No. 2 to No. 8 in the polls. I thought, my gosh, as poorly as we played, we should have dropped further than that. And we came back and played Washington for the national championship that year. I think that (example) shows that the traditional powers get more second chances than the non-traditional powers."

NO BACKING DOWN FOR NEUHEISEL

It cost him a blue-chip quarterback prospect, but Colorado coach Rick Neuheisel doesn't doubt that he made the correct call when he selected Mike Moschetti (pronounced Muh-Sket-ee) to start over Jeremy Weisinger.

Weisinger, one of the nation's top prep prospects when he played at Uvalde, Texas, quit the team the day Neuheisel announced his decision. Weisinger dropped out of school and enrolled a few days later at Texas A&M.

Neuheisel said he wasn't surprised when Weisinger informed him he wanted out and asked for his release.

"His father had indicated that might be a possible outcome if I chose the other kid," Neuheisel said. "But when you come down to making decisions that are going to affect your team, you can't worry about what might or might not happen if you choose one way."

"A lot of kids got bad news in terms of where they were on the depth chart, and only Jeremy decided to leave."

Texas A&M finished second to CU in the initial recruiting process to sign Weisinger. Aggies' coach R.C. Slocum said he agreed to give Weisinger a second chance at A&M only after the player agreed to give free safety a try.

"Jeremy told me he wants to play football, and is not really concerned about where he plays," Slocum said. "We talked about the possibility of him playing free safety and he said he was receptive to that."

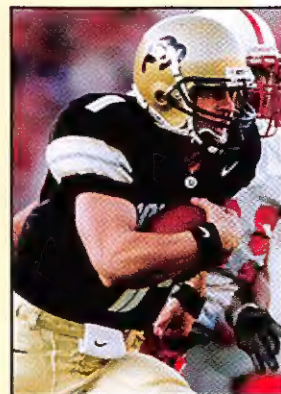
Weisinger will have to sit out this season and will have one season of eligibility remaining as a fifth-year senior. His father has said he might petition the NCAA to give his son a sixth year of eligibility, because Jeremy missed a season at Colorado after suffering a serious leg injury while lifting weights.

SHORT SHOTS

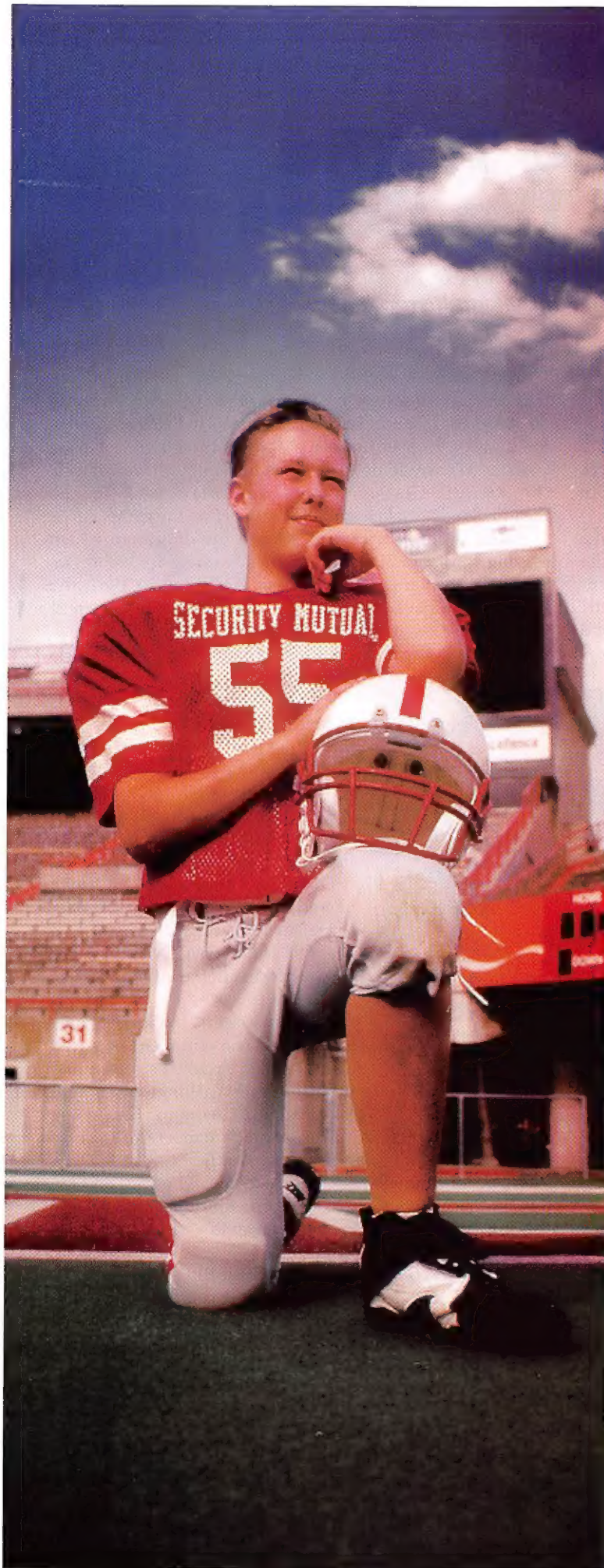
• Last Saturday's Kansas-Oklahoma State game in Lawrence, which received regional coverage on ABC-TV, didn't sell out prior to the game. KU officials, apparently concerned with what potential recruits might think if they saw a load of empty seats in Memorial Stadium, offered free tickets to the game to students and faculty members.

• Because of academic problems, Baylor coach Dave Roberts won't have running back Ben Gay available until next season. But that's fine with Roberts, who is already singing the praises of Gay. "I don't know if I've had anybody with his kind of style . . . somebody who is 225 pounds and runs a 10.2 (100 meters). I've had some great backs, and a lot of them are in the NFL. But this one is going to be a lot different from the style of backs that I've had. He's a big man."

• Iowa State coach Dan McCarney said it's essential to find some defensive linemen with the size to combat the huge offensive linemen in the Big 12 because "it seems like you're lining up against five hotels every week." ■ — Dave Sittler



Jeremy Weisinger decided he'd rather play safety at Texas A&M then sit through a senior year at Colorado as a back-up quarterback.



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Returning To The Scene Of The Crime

Washington, the last team to win in Memorial Stadium, returns with thoughts of making history again



**Mike
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"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." — John Howard Payne

BOBBY NEWCOMBE was barely a month past his 12th birthday. George Bush was nearing the end of his term as president of the United States.

And there was talk that the Nebraska football program had fallen from the nation's elite. The Cornhuskers had finished the previous season with a 9-3 record, ranked in a tie for 17th in the United Press International coaches poll and 24th in the *Associated Press* media poll.

The final rankings were the lowest in Tom Osborne's 25 seasons as head coach.

The year was 1991. Nebraska had opened the season with a pair of victories to move up to No. 9 in the AP poll. The Cornhuskers had defeated Utah State, 59-28, and Colorado State, 71-14. Both of the games were at Memorial Stadium, with a third in a row there against Washington.

The game offered an opportunity for Nebraska to reclaim some national respect. Washington, regarded as a serious contender for the national championship, came to town ranked No. 4 by the AP.

For the better part of three quarters, it appeared the Cornhuskers might pull off the upset, much to the delight of a crowd of 76,304, the 178th consecutive sellout at Memorial Stadium.

Late in the third quarter, Nebraska led 21-9; however, the upset was not to be.

With 19 seconds remaining in the period, Washington's Beno Bryant ran 15 yards for a touchdown, the first of four unanswered touchdowns the Huskies would score before the final gun sounded.

At game's end, the scoreboard read: Washington 36, Nebraska 21.

The Cornhuskers haven't lost a game at Memorial Stadium since that night of Sept. 21, 1991. Their home winning streak has increased to 44 games, fifth-best in NCAA Division I-A history.

Miami (Fla.) tops the list, winning 58 in a row at the Orange Bowl from 1985 to 1994. Interestingly enough, Washington snapped the Hurricanes' record-setting streak, 38-20.

The Cornhuskers enjoy a considerable home field advantage, in part because of Memorial Stadium's ongoing NCAA-record 222 consecutive sellouts. That was a factor in the decision to play Louisiana Tech in the Eddie Robinson Classic. "We would not have done this if it was, for instance, the Kickoff Classic, where you play back in the Meadowlands," Solich said the week before the game.

Solich significantly understated the degree to which playing at Memorial Stadium is an advantage for Nebraska. Since Bob Devaney arrived from Wyoming in 1962, the Cornhuskers have lost only 24 home games, and seven of those have been against old conference nemesis Oklahoma. Only seven losses have come at the hands of non-conference

opponents.

Devaney's teams lost nine games at Memorial Stadium in 11 seasons, five of them in 1967 and 1968. Three of the five came in 1968, when the 6-4 Cornhuskers lost back-to-back home games — on consecutive Saturdays, no less — for the only time in the past 37 seasons.

Osborne's teams lost 15 home games and as many as two in only three seasons, all in his first five years as head coach. Nebraska has been perfect at home in 11 of the last 20 seasons.

The Cornhuskers' last loss at home to a conference opponent occurred in 1990, under circumstances similar to those of the Washington game in 1991. They led Colorado, 12-0, going into the fourth quarter, on a night with temperatures in the 30s and a light rain driven by gusty winds.

However, running back Eric Bieniemy, who had fumbled five times (three of them lost), scored four touchdowns, and the Buffaloes won, 27-12, on their way to a national championship.

That an opponent would be physically stronger in the fourth quarter was more than Osborne could take, particularly in a game at Memorial Stadium, with the emotional energy of 76,464 partisan fans.

Less than 11 months later, the same thing would happen. The Cornhuskers would wilt at the end against a Washington team that also would win a national championship. It hasn't happened since.

The Huskies return to the scene of the crime on Saturday and will attempt to repeat a rare accomplishment and end Nebraska's home winning streak in the process.

Their task is not an enviable one, as the record shows. ■



Prior to the 1991 Washington loss, Nebraska had won 20 consecutive non-conference home games.

William Lauer



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Running Option Before Option Was Cool

Just like anything retro, teams are coming full circle and again jumping on the option bandwagon. But they should remember who never gave it up



BILL DOLEMAN

THESE ARE INTERESTING times in which we live and play football. Have you noticed how everything old is new again? Of course you have. It's a tired cliché. Tired but true.

The Beetle is back. Retro is still in. The Brady Bunch is still cool. And now *Sports Illustrated* tells us that the option offense is "all the rage" in college football.

In the magazine's 1998 college football preview issue, writer Tim Layden chronicles the resurgence of the option in playbooks all across the country. Any Nebraska fan worth his or her Big Red overalls must be wondering: Why all the fuss? Everyone in these here parts knows that the Huskers have been running the option since . . . well, since it was chiseled into stone tablets years ago.

However, the article details how the option was born at the University of Texas in the spring of 1968. Conceived in the minds of then-head coach Darrell Royal and assistant Emory Bellard, UT's triple-option Wishbone attack led to national championships in 1969 and 1970 — one shared with Nebraska.

It spawned a generation of teams that changed their schemes to match the Longhorns with the hopes of copying their success. In the 1970s, nobody did it better than Oklahoma. For the last 18 years and counting, nobody has done it — or is doing it — better than Nebraska.

Which is why I read the piece with some amusement and some disbelief. It only says that at Nebraska, "the option never went out of style" and states that the Huskers have parlayed it into a 60-3 record and three national championships in five years. So that must be the reason teams are beginning to put their eggs into another basket. To play with Nebraska, you must play like Nebraska, right?

Wrong. According to *Sports Illustrated's* findings, teams are switching because offenses are reacting to the attacking style of defense that is en vogue in the 1990s.

You know, the kind of defense played by Nebraska, the kind of defense the Huskers have parlayed into a 60-3 record and three national championships in the last five years.

It seems to me that either way, the Big Red is the trend-setter these days.

That certainly wasn't the case during the 1980s and early '90s. That's when fans and the news media clamored for Tom Osborne to put the ball in the air like everybody else, ridiculing him for his offensive philosophy, saying that it was antiquated and lacked imagination. Through it all, the soon-to-be Hall of Fame head coach kept all of his options open on the way to 255 career victories.

Let me tell you, if the option is all the rage, then Tom Osborne is one groovy dude. *Sports Illustrated* says Air Force coach Fisher DeBerry, whose team employs the Wishbone, is called "a read-and-pitch Yoda." If that's true, then Osborne is the Obi-Wan Kenobi of the option.

According to *SI*, Bob Stoops, the defensive coordinator at Florida, says he has the answer when it comes to defending the option offense: Hit the quarterback. Layden quotes Stoops: "Let's see how a team feels about running the option when their guy gets knocked out by an ear-hole shot."

True, but you can't hit what you can't catch. As I recall, wasn't it Florida that couldn't stop Tommie Frazier on an option that resulted in a 75-yard touchdown run in the third quarter of the 1996 Fiesta Bowl? Granted, Stoops was at Kansas State at the time — not stopping Nebraska's option there, either.

If anyone has a good read on the option, it's Dave Gillespie. The current Husker running backs coach was the defensive line coach at Kansas in 1995 and 1996. He's been on both sides of the battle lines, and he clearly enjoys

the view from Lincoln. "You have to be disciplined on defense to cover all aspects of the option," he said. "And I can tell you from being at Kansas, no one runs more different kinds of option or runs it better than Nebraska — and you can't simulate the speed and proficiency.

"Our offense is the ultimate nightmare to prepare for. Some teams may have the option. Some may have the play-action pass. And others might run right at you. But no one does it all as well as Nebraska."

Which means that jumping on the option bandwagon is one thing, but stopping the Big Red machine is another. ■



Since marrying the option in 1980, the Huskers have led both the Big Eight and Big 12 Conferences in nearly every offensive category that doesn't include passing.

Bob Berry

Plug And Replace

Historically, Nebraska has had such incredible depth that even when key starters like Newcombe and Evans go down, a beat is rarely missed



Curt McKEEVER

BOBBY NEWCOMBE rested his injured left knee against Alabama-Birmingham, so Frank Solich handed the ball to another shifty quarterback who was a Parade All-American, Eric Crouch.

I-back Correll Buckhalter continued to lower the boom on anybody in his way, a soothing tonic for Cornhusker fans and coaches awaiting DeAngelo Evans to complete his comeback from a preseason knee

injury.

Wingback Lance Brown sat out the first of at least five games with a broken bone in his right foot, but the level of play at wingback by Shevin Wiggins was just as good.

Free safety Clint Finley, out since the first week of practice with a damaged ligament in his right knee, didn't have to push his return because of Mike Brown's versatility. Brown slid over from strong safety, allowing his backup, Joe Walker, to gain some valuable starting experience.

I could go on, but what's the use. At Nebraska, injuries to key players never seem to cause derailment because the Cornhuskers always have somebody ready to move into that "key" category to keep them rolling full steam ahead.

"I've been in a program where if we suffered as many losses as we have this fall, we would have waved the white flag," said first-year running backs coach Dave Gillespie, who spent the previous four years at Kansas.

At Nebraska, the competition is so great at nearly every position that depth is fairly easy to develop.

Year after year after year . . .

In 1997, the Cornhuskers were lucky. There were only three cases all season when the NU coaches had to replace an injured starter. But a year later, that number was matched in the first two games.

"I hope we can handle it," said Frank Solich, who had to deal with 11 first- and second-team players missing at least part of practice during the week leading up to the Alabama-Birmingham game.

While the rookie head coach called the avalanche of injuries ridiculous, he also didn't appear too concerned over having to work around them.

"We have no choice, but we don't feel too bad about these guys coming in, either," he said. "They'll be good."

It's going to take a lot of bad luck for Nebraska to reach a point of panic.

Sure, losing someone like place-kicker Kris Brown would be cause for major concern. The Cornhuskers also probably need their interior defensive line starters to stay intact to avoid a drop-off early in the year. But almost everywhere else, there are No. 2 players who have been in the system and are ready to play.

For obvious reasons, no one was checked out more closely than Crouch.

For starters, all the other backups filling in for injured players had already proven themselves. Crouch, on the other hand, took his first snap as a Cornhusker against Louisiana Tech and saw only mop-up duty.

But those facts seemed insignificant to the 6-foot, 200-pound redshirt freshman.

"I feel comfortable I can take control of the offense and move the ball down the field," he said before the UAB game.

Maybe because he's seen so many others before him do the same.

Most recently, Brook Berringer did it for Tommie Frazier in 1994.

Back in 1982, Mark Maurer stepped in for Crouch's position coach, Turner Gill, to lead Nebraska past Oklahoma and keep the Cornhuskers in the running for a national championship.

"When I look back on people that got hurt, each one of those players (who moved up) played very well," Crouch said. "That has to do a lot with how the coaches prepare the quarterbacks."

Crouch went into NU's second game of the year knowing he was Newcombe's replacement. But he took the field confident that he could play well enough to give Gill some things to ponder when

Newcombe had returned to 100 percent.

Now, the guy who's taken Scott Frost's old jersey number — and locker — gets a crack at moving the Cornhuskers. Judging from the lack of talk about Crouch on the sports call-in shows during the week following Newcombe's injury, I'd say there was little doubt that Crouch would get the job done. The same could also be said for Buckhalter, Wiggins and Brown. ■



Just as Brook Berringer (above) filled in for an injured Tommie Frazier, Eric Crouch will prove to be a more-than-serviceable replacement for Bobby Newcombe.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Brock And Roll Show In Lincoln

Nebraska defensive backs should be ready for Huskies to throw early and often

By Mark DEROWITSCH

It was far from perfect, but Washington's season-opening upset against eighth-ranked Arizona State gave the Huskies something to celebrate.

The thing is, Washington coach Jim Lambright won't let them.

After knocking off the Sun Devils 42-38, on the road to open the season, thanks to Brock Huard's 63-yard touchdown pass to Reggie Davis with 28 seconds left in the fourth quarter, you could excuse Lambright for giving his Huskies some time to savor the win. After all, Washington knocked off

the preseason favorite to win the championship in the Pac-10 Conference and had an open week prior to resuming play.

Give Lambright credit, though. Up next for the Huskies is Brigham Young on Sept. 19, followed by a trip to Lincoln on Sept. 26 to face Nebraska.

According to Lambright, the Huskies have work to do and don't intend to waste a moment looking back at the opener.

"The thing for this football team is to refocus now on ways that we can improve on the lessons that we were able to learn from the Arizona State game, and move on and get better," Lambright said. "That right now is our focus and I'm extremely pleased with the productivity and the win in general."

One thing the Huskies won't have to worry about is their offense. Against the Sun Devils, Washington gained 431 yards of total offense, 318 of which came from the arm of Huard.

Huard completed 27-of-47 passes and threw for four touchdowns in the opener, proving once again that he makes the Huskies offense go.

Last season, Huard missed most of two games and the entire contest against Oregon because of a badly sprained ankle, which he suffered against Nebraska. He still threw for 2,140 yards and 23 touchdowns.

When the Huskies come to Lincoln, spectators can expect to see a pass-happy offense.

"This will be a year where we might use the pass to help set up the run," Lambright said. "We've always been a well-balanced offense, and I don't see that changing. If we have Brock all year, I think you'll see him put up some very impressive numbers."

Huard's backup also has impressive credentials. After Huard got hurt

WASHINGTON
(1-0)

@

NEBRASKA
(3-0)




Brock HUARD

Erwin SWINEY

September 26, 1998 • 2:30 p.m. (CST)
Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.

against the Huskers last season, then-freshman Marques Tuiasosopo came in and threw for 270 yards. He also had a 261-yard passing day against Oregon.

The reason Huard's arm may be the busiest weapon in Washington is the Huskies' inexperienced running game. Junior Maurice Shaw and Jason Harris shared time at tailback against the Sun Devils, and the two did combine for

Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	6	Kenny Cheatham***	6-4	210	Sr.
	3	Matt Davison*	6-0	180	So.
LT	69	Adam Julch**	6-5	315	Jr.
	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	280	Sr.
LG	63	Jamas Sherman**	6-2	295	Jr.
	54	Dominic Ralola	6-2	300	Fr.
C	59	Josh Haskew***	6-3	290	Sr.
	54	Dominic Ralola	6-2	300	Fr.
RG	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
	55	Rues Hochstein*	6-3	280	So.
RT	65	Jason Schwab*	6-1	300	Jr.
	58	Dave Volk	6-4	280	Fr.
TE	68	Sheldon Jackson***	6-4	245	Sr.
	85	T.J. DeBates**	6-3	250	Jr.
QB	12	Bobby Newcombe*	6-0	195	So.
-or-	7	Eric Crouch	6-0	200	Fr.
FB	45	Joel Makovicka***	5-11	240	Sr.
	15	Willie Miller*	6-0	230	So.
IB	35	Correll Buckhalter*	6-0	225	So.
	38	Dan Alexander*	6-0	250	So.
WB	5	Shevin Wiggins**	5-11	200	Sr.
	1	Frankie London**	6-0	180	Jr.
PK	14	Kris Brown***	5-10	205	Sr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

LR	37	Chad Kelsv***	6-4	210	Sr.
	33	Kyle Vanden Bosch*	6-0	180	So.
NT	35	Steve Warren	6-0	210	So.
	36	Jason Lohm	6-0	210	So.
OL	81	Loren Kiser*	6-0	210	So.
	82	Jeremy Blechman*	6-0	210	So.
LB	84	Mike Rucker***	6-0	210	So.
	85	Aaron Willis	6-0	210	So.
	86	Blair Shaw**	6-0	210	So.
	87	Tony Ortiz	6-0	210	So.
	88	Jay Foreman***	6-0	210	So.
	89	Carlos Polk	6-0	210	So.
	90	Eric Johnson**	6-0	210	So.
	91	Julius Jackson**	6-0	210	So.
	92	Erwin Swiney	6-0	210	So.
	93	Keyuo Craven	6-0	210	So.
	94	Mike Brown*	6-0	210	So.
	95	Dion Booker	6-0	210	So.
	96	Joe Walker*	6-0	210	So.
	97	Gregg L.	6-0	210	So.
	98	Ralph Brown	6-0	210	So.
	99	Jerome Peterson**	6-0	210	So.
	100	Bill Lefleur**	6-0	210	So.

Tentative 2 Deeps

WASHINGTON DEFENSE

SLB	33	Jeremiah Pharms	6-0	180	So.
	34	Odell George	6-0	180	So.
OLB	35	Joah Smith	6-0	180	So.
	36	Nick Felchner	6-0	180	So.
ILB	37	Mac Tuinei*	6-0	180	So.
	38	Toalei Maitausopele	6-0	180	So.
	39	Jabari Iles	6-0	180	So.
	40	Ryan Jones	6-0	180	So.
	41	Marques Hairston	6-0	180	So.
	42	Derek Nobis	6-0	180	So.
	43	Jeff Johnson	6-0	180	So.
	44	Ken Walker	6-0	180	So.
	45	Todd Johnson	6-0	180	So.
	46	Dorrek Daniels	6-0	180	So.
	47	Nigel Burton	6-0	180	So.
	48	Renard Edwards	6-0	180	So.
	49	Brandon Jones	6-0	180	So.
	50	Hakim Akbar	6-0	180	So.
	51	Jermaine Smith	6-0	180	So.
	52	Wondene Davis	6-0	180	So.
	53	Louise Butler	6-0	180	So.
	54	Omere Lowe	6-0	180	So.
	55	Ryan Fleming	6-0	180	So.

WASHINGTON OFFENSE

SE	4	Ja'Warren Hooker	5-11	165	So.
	84	Todd Elstrom	6-3	190	Fr.
WT	68	Elliot Silvers	6-6	300	So.
	79	Joe Collier	6-7	270	Fr.
WG	67	Tony Costa	6-7	310	Sr.
	60	Dominic Daste	6-3	320	So.
C	51	Brad Hutt	6-3	285	Sr.
	70	Ben Kadletz	6-2	310	Sr.
SG	79	Chad Ward	6-5	315	So.
	54	Matt Fraize	6-4	300	So.
ST	75	Aaron Dalan	6-7	325	Sr.
	55	Rock Nelson	6-5	280	Fr.
TE	6	Reggie Davis	6-3	230	Sr.
	81	Anthony Mizin	6-4	255	Jr.
QB	7	Brock Huard	6-5	225	Jr.
	11	Marques Tuiasosopo	6-2	215	So.
TB	32	Maurice Shaw	6-0	215	Jr.
	18	Jason Harris	6-0	210	Jr.
FB	47	Pat Conniff	6-1	235	So.
	80	Dane Looker	6-1	190	Jr.
FL	9	Gerald Harris	6-1	190	So.
	43	Mijo Austin	6-1	185	So.
K	14	Jim Skurski	6-11	190	Fr.

nearly 800 yards last season while backing up current Kansas City Chiefs running back Rashaan Shehee.

However, Lambright said the Huskies ground attack performed well against Arizona State. Washington ran the ball just 28 times and picked up 113 yards. Shaw led the team with 58 yards on 15 carries. The Huskies averaged just over 161 yards on the ground last season.

"Our running game was very solid," Lambright said. "It gave us yards when we needed yards and it gave us a good way of keeping the pressure off of the passing game, and that is what we have to do all year."

Protection for Huard, then, is crucial. The offensive line didn't allow a sack by the Sun Devils, and Lambright singled out the play of center Brad Hutt, guard Tony Coats and tackle Aaron Dalan.

"The unsung heroes of the offensive line, you can't credit them enough," he said. "We didn't have a sack (allowed) in the game. When you're throwing that many balls and the pass is such a huge part of the game plan, they did a good job all the way through the game."

Huard's impressive performance came with a group of untested receivers. Ja'Warren Hooker, the starting split end who was the NCAA indoor 55-meter dash champion last season, sat out the game with a shoulder injury and should be able to play against the Huskers.

Flanker Dane Looker came through with a career-best 11 catches for 108 yards, tight end Davis caught five passes for 110 yards and Gerald Harris had four catches.

The receiving corps will get a boost with the return of Hooker. Last season, he touched the ball just eight times but turned four of them into touchdowns. He caught just six passes, but averaged more than 22 yards per reception and scored three times. He also returned a kickoff 89 yards for a touchdown against Arizona.

"All he needs is time and experience," Lambright said. "He is without a doubt the fastest player ever to play at the University of Washington."

Defensively, the Huskies appear to need a lot of work.

Outside of the fact that Washington beat Arizona State, not much good came from its defense. The Sun Devils gained 465 yards of total offense and erased a 35-28 deficit at the end of the third quarter with a field goal early in the fourth and a touchdown with two minutes left in the game before Huard rallied the offense to the last-minute score.

Washington was tough against the run last season, holding seven of its 12 opponents to fewer than 100 yards rushing. Tackle Mac Tuiaea and Jabari Issa return to anchor the middle of the Huskies' interior line.

Washington appears to be set at linebacker with Lester Towns, a Butkus Award candidate this season who led the team in tackles in 1997 with 89, and Marques Hairston both returning to reclaim starting jobs.

"Lester and Marcus really complement each other well and, having played together for a season, I think they will be one of this best linebacker combinations in the country," Lambright said.

Towns missed the second half of spring drills after undergoing surgery on his foot, but he appears to have his speed back. He is arguably the biggest hitter on the Husky defense, and he has plenty of power as well.

Rover Nigel Burton returns to lead a young secondary that gave up more than 300 yards to Arizona State. The Huskies have Mel Miller and Jermaine Smith returning at cornerback, but sophomore Toure Butler has worked his way into the starting lineup and has excellent potential. ■

TALE OF THE TAPE

Who Has The Edge?

QUARTERBACKS

Both Bobby Newcombe and Eric Crouch have proven to be valuable to Nebraska. It's not a knock to be the other quarterback when you're matched up against Heisman candidate Brock Huard.



RUNNING BACKS

Washington's tailback by committee won't be much of a match for Nebraska. With DeAngelo Evans returning and Correll Buckhalter gaining confidence, look for Nebraska's running game to hit a higher gear.



RECEIVERS

If Hooker is healthy, Washington has a pretty good cast surrounding Huard. Nebraska's stats aren't impressive — the Husker receivers just constantly get the job done.



OFFENSIVE LINE

Didn't give up a sack to the Sun Devils, Huskies? There is definitely a better than average chance that the Blackshirts will put an end to that streak. The Huskers' offensive front has been solid in the early going.



DEFENSIVE LINE

Washington is tough against the run, but the Huskers managed to pile up 384 yards last year. Stick to the pass-happy Pac-10. Nebraska's defensive line is getting better with each game and should cause trouble for Huard.



LINEBACKERS

Washington's leader is Lester Towns, who made 89 tackles last year. He'll have his hands full against Nebraska. Marques Hairston also has speed and a keen nose for the football.



SECONDARY

Huard will challenge NU's secondary early and often. It's a good thing he doesn't have Troy Edwards to throw to. The Huskies' secondary is young and can be beaten with big plays.



SPECIAL TEAMS

Kris Brown is automatic. He'll win a game by himself before the season is finished. This could be the one. Redshirt freshman Jim Skurski took over the place-kicking duties for Nick Lentz.



CB RALPH BROWN VS WR JA'WARREN HOOKER

KEY MATCHUP

Ja'Warren Hooker is the fastest man at Washington and perhaps the fastest in the nation. The NCAA sprint champion will give Ralph Brown and the Nebraska defensive backs plenty to worry about. Brown is experienced and is used to going up against quality receivers. Hooker doesn't fit this bill yet, but if he gets loose long, it will be worth looking at.

Brown will have to make contact with Hooker at the line of scrimmage, or else the Huskies' burner will get by him and give Brock Huard a big-play threat. Hooker averaged 22.7 yards per reception a season ago. If he can be contained, then the Huskers will have a good chance of shutting down Washington's other receivers.

The entire Nebraska secondary will be on the spot in this game. Everybody knows that Washington will throw the ball between 40-50 times a game, so Brown and his secondary mates will have to step up.

The Brown-Hooker matchup could be one of the most intriguing individual matchups of the season and will be something to keep an eye on. ■

The cannon on the hill to the east of California's Memorial Stadium, just up from the banner proclaiming the location "tightwad hill," was fired once in celebration of a score.

It went off after California's Timi Wolleck kicked a 38-yard field goal with 6:42 remaining in the third quarter, shaking the stadium as if an earthquake were about to despoil the beauty of Strawberry Canyon.

The cannon also announced the pre-game arrival of the Golden Bears, and it was fired once or twice in ceremonial functions.

However, there were no touchdowns to celebrate, and no other Golden Bear field goals in Nebraska's 24-3 victory, which was, after all, the bottom line.

"Coming in as a new coach, 3-0 sounds awfully good to me," Cornhusker coach Frank Solich said. "We've got things to work on, just like everybody else. But so far, so good."

Solich had good reason for saying that, given the health of his team. For the second week in a row, quarterback Bobby Newcombe was forced to watch from the sideline because of a slight tear in a knee ligament. That meant for the second week in a row, redshirt freshman Eric Crouch started.

But Crouch was ailing, too, and with just over six minutes remaining in the third quarter, he gave way to oft-injured senior Monte Christo, who responded by immediately throwing a touchdown pass.

Newcombe wasn't the only starter missing for the Cornhuskers in the game.

On defense, rush end Mike Rucker started but played only briefly because of a pelvic-related injury that has flared up this season.

Defensive tackle Jason Wiltz made the trip but didn't play because of a severe ankle sprain. Safety Clint Finley was still recovering from a knee strain that has sidelined him since preseason practice.

Offensively, wingback Lance Brown stayed home with a broken foot, offensive tackle Jeff Clausen wasn't included on the travel roster because of a knee injury and I-back DeAngelo Evans hadn't been given medical clearance to play after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery in late August.

The injuries to the starters left Nebraska a shadow of the team that was ranked No. 3 and No. 4 in the two major polls going into the game.

Nevertheless, it was good enough to pick up a win on the road against a California team that had nine returning starters on defense and a mobile left-handed senior quarterback in Justin Vedder.

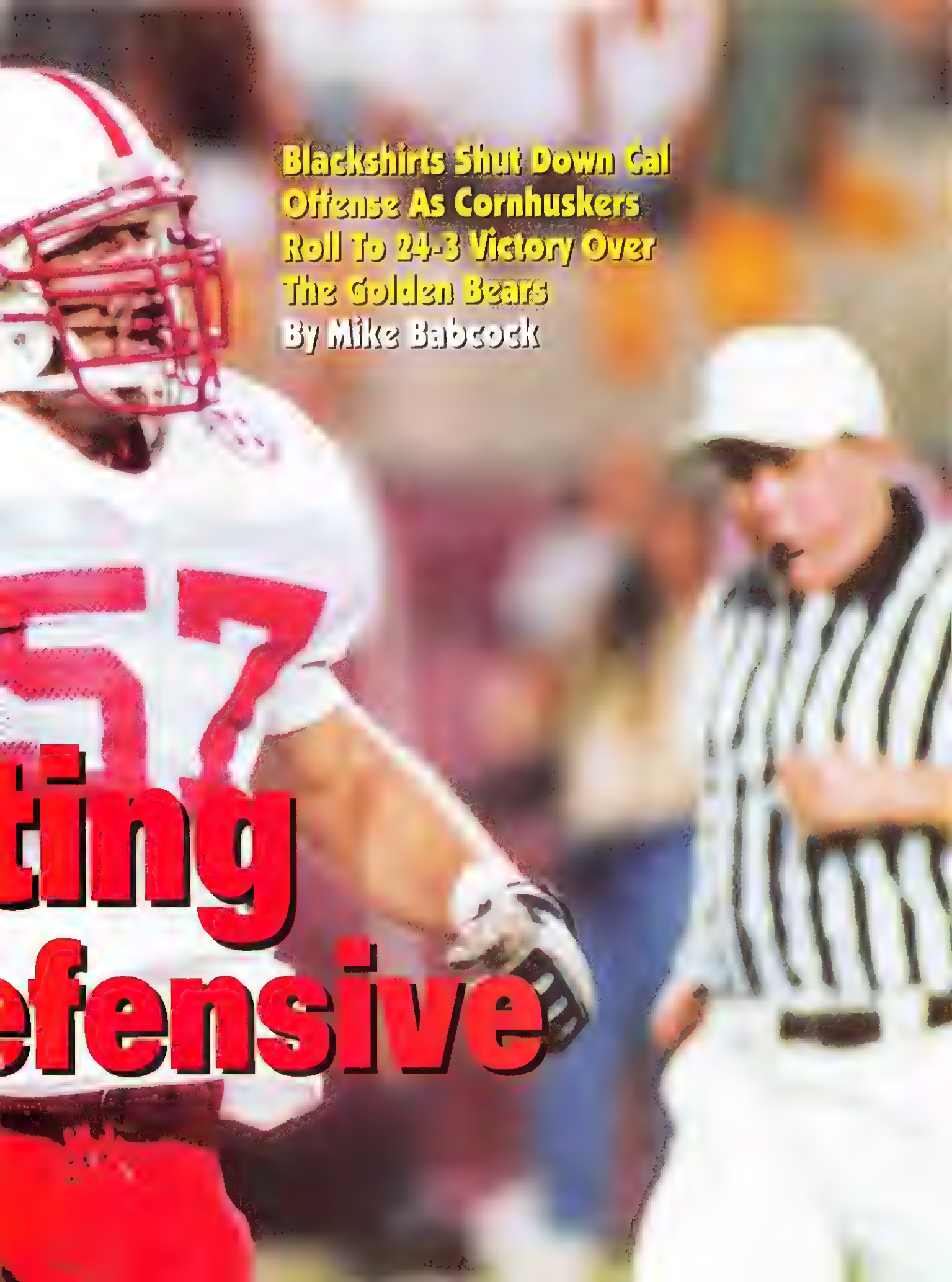
Vedder completed 14-of-32 passes for 224 yards. But he was intercepted twice and couldn't get the Golden Bears into the end-zone.

Unable to establish a ground game, Vedder was forced to try and make plays on his own. The Golden Bears gained just 12 net yards rushing in the game. Three Nebraska players — Crouch, Joel Makovicka and Correll Buckhalter — outgained California on their own.

Marcus Fields was the leading ground gainer for the Golden Bears, running for just 31 yards on eight carries.

Senior rush end Chad Kelsay was a primary contributor in the Cornhuskers' 21-point win over Cal.





**Blackshirts Shut Down Cal
Offense As Cornhuskers
Roll To 24-3 Victory Over
The Golden Bears**
By Mike Babcock

**ting
defensive**



The Nebraska defense, including (from left to right) Chad Kelsay, Jay Foreman and Brian Shaw, rose to the occasion in the Cornhuskers' win at Cal.

It wasn't that California didn't have scoring opportunities. The Bears did. But except for the Wolleck field goal, the California offense was stopped by an energized Blackshirt defense that is beginning to show signs of developing at last.

A key figure in the defensive resurgence against the Golden Bears was senior rush end Chad Kelsay, who made his presence felt in pressuring Vedder throughout the game.

"Chad has had three excellent games in a row," Solich said. "His quickness and his relentlessness have really shown in those three games."

Nebraska defensive coordinator Charlie McBride agreed.

"Kelsay? He's been great every game," said McBride.

Senior middle linebacker Jay Foreman also rose to the challenge against the Golden Bears.

"Overall, I thought it was a good effort," Foreman said. "But I still think we can get better. We're finally starting to come around and show what kind of defense we can be.

"If we've got our backs to the wall, we've still got to play hard. We knew we were in for a challenge."

Even though the Cornhuskers were favored by as many as 23 points, their injuries were an equalizer against the scrappy Golden Bears.

Nevertheless, "you still have to play with the cards you're dealt," said Foreman, one of five senior co-captains. "That's what we're doing right now."

Nebraska started out as if it were going to make short work of the Golden Bears, who were made to feel a little like visitors in their own stadium. A substantial part of the crowd, which was announced at 67,000, was dressed in red. Husker fans constituted approximately half of the fans in attendance.

Under the direction of Crouch, who rushed for 59 yards and two touchdowns and completed 6-of-16 passes for 74 yards with one interception, the Cornhuskers drove 67 yards on seven plays on their first possession.

The interception, which was the first allowed by Nebraska this season, came with six seconds remaining in the first half. The 44-yard pass carried to the California 4-yard line, so the interception posed no problem.

Nebraska, in contrast, intercepted two of Vedder's passes. The first interception was made by free safety Mike Brown and the second by middle linebacker Carlos Polk. The interception by Polk set up a 41-yard Kris Brown field goal with 19 seconds remaining in the contest.

The field goal was Solich's lone

regret in the game.

"If I had it to do over with, I wouldn't have done it," Solich said in answer to a reporter's question.

"I wish I had gone the other way with it. But you live with that."

The alternative would have been to run out the clock.

The Cornhuskers started off running as they have in recent seasons, gaining 200 yards on the ground in the first half.

"It looked like we were going to maybe be able to move the ball well against them," Solich said.

But California stacked the line of scrimmage and used its defensive speed to significantly slow down Nebraska's running attack in the second half. The Cornhuskers finished with 254 yards rushing, on 60 attempts.

Makovicka was the game's leading rusher with 83 yards on 14 attempts and Buckhalter contributed 71 yards on 12 carries.

The passing of Christo, in particular, kept California's defense off balance. Wingback Shevin Wiggins and split end Matt Davison caught 12 passes between them for a combined 141

yards.

"Monte ran hard," said Solich. "He ran well, and he threw a couple of passes that kept a couple of drives alive."

On the nine-play, 70-yard drive that culminated in a 5-yard touchdown pass to Wiggins on third down, Christo passed to Davison for a 20-yard gain on a third-and-8 from the California 20-yard line. The first play of the series was a 20-yard pass to Wiggins. The touchdown reception by Wiggins was the first of his career.

Solich came back to the play of the defense, however, as the key to the victory, Nebraska's 17th in a row over two seasons.

"I felt they really stepped it up this week," he said of the Blackshirts. "They responded in a very good fashion. We needed that type of play from them."

Even though the victory wasn't overly impressive, it was a victory nonetheless, which was something Florida State and Notre Dame couldn't accomplish on that particular day.

The Seminoles were shocked by North Carolina State, and Notre Dame was humbled by Michigan State, one week after handing Michigan a severe drubbing.

Aesthetically, the victory might have been more pleasing.

"We did not move the ball with a lot of consistency," Solich said. "When you're talking about consistency with the offense, you're talking about wanting to score on every drive and making big plays. We'll work at it."

"And hopefully get some guys healed up. In my mind, they certainly earned all three victories."

After the game, Solich also acknowledged California's emotional effort.

"(California) did not quit," he said. "They fought back tremendously hard."

"I thought there were a lot of opportunities for both teams."

"We had our chances. They had their chances, too."

But the Bears managed to convert only one of their scoring opportunities into points.

Unfortunately for the Golden Bears, it wasn't nearly enough against Nebraska.

The cannon on "tightwad hill," so named because those on its slope could look down into the stadium without buying a ticket, sounded only once in meaningful celebration.

And once was enough. ■

4TH & 1 INCHES

More News From The California Game

• **Mark McGwire** hit home run No. 62 on Sept. 9 to set off a celebration throughout major league baseball. Also, Cornhusker coach **Frank Solich** celebrated his 54th birthday on Sept. 9, though it wasn't exactly a celebration. "I stopped messing with birthdays a long time ago," said Solich, who was preoccupied, of course, with preparing Nebraska for the California game.

• The pre-California depth chart included several changes, among them promotions for young defensive backs **Keyuo Craver** and **Dion Booker**. Craver, a true freshman from Harleton, Texas, moved up to second at left cornerback behind **Erwin Swiney**. Booker, a redshirt freshman from Oceanside, Calif., moved from fourth to second at free safety, behind **Mike Brown**.

Brown has been playing free safety while **Clint Finley** recovers from a severe knee strain. Finley is expected to be able to return to action for the Washington game.

In addition, sophomore walk-on **Troy Watchorn** has been moved from free safety to rover, where he was listed third behind **Joe Walker** and **Gregg List** for the California game.

With senior wingback **Lance Brown** sidelined by a broken foot, junior **Frankie London** moved up to second on the depth chart, behind **Shevin Wiggins**, and sophomore **John Gibson** was moved from split end to wingback.

Damien Bauman, a 6-foot-3, 275-pound transfer from Central Florida, appeared on the depth chart for the first time as the No. 4 tight end. He was among 85 players who made the trip to California.

• Three Nebraska starters are Californians, all from the southern part of the state: cornerback **Ralph Brown** from Hacienda Heights, left offensive guard **James Sherman** from LaVerne and tight end **Sheldon Jackson** from Diamond Bar. The Cornhuskers have had at least one starter from California in each of the last 26 seasons. They've had 33 starters from California since 1973.

• As of October of 1997, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, including the medical school, had more alumni living in California than in any other state except Nebraska. The total was 7,703, or nearly 700 more than Colorado, which was third (7,013). Texas was fourth with 4,700.

So it was hardly surprising that Nebraska sold out its allotment of 15,000 tickets for the game. An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 tickets were sold to Cornhusker fans through the California ticket office.

• Membership in the Californians for Nebraska booster club is approximately 1,500, with the majority of them living in southern California.

• With Saturday's victory, Nebraska is now 29-17-3 all-time against Pac-10 opponents, including 8-3 during the 1990s. The Cornhuskers will be attempting to make it 9-3 when they return to action in two weeks against Washington at Memorial Stadium.

• The California game was Nebraska's first in the San Francisco Bay area. The Huskers improved their record to 3-4-1 in California, with all of the previous games being played in the Los Angeles area. The total includes the 1941 Rose Bowl loss to Stanford.

• California issued a combined 15 credentials to six television stations from Nebraska, with most of the stations providing live reports. ■



1998 Schedule/Record (3-0)

Aug. 29	vs. Louisiana Tech\$	W, 56-27
Sept. 5	Ala.-Birmingham	W, 38-7
Sept. 12	@ California	W, 24-3
Sept. 26	Washington	2:30 p.m.
Oct. 3	vs. Oklahoma St.&	TBA
Oct. 10	@ Texas A&M	1 p.m.
Oct. 17	Kansas	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 24	Missouri	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 31	Texas	12:30 p.m.
Nov. 7	@ Iowa St.	1 p.m.
Nov. 14	@ Kansas St.	1:10 p.m.
Nov. 27	Colorado	1:30 p.m.

\$ Eddie Robinson Football Classic • Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.
& Arrowhead Stadium • Kansas City, Mo.
(Times are subject to change and are Central)

BY THE NUMBERS

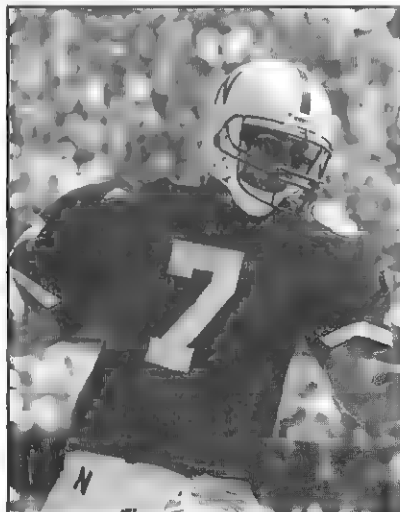
Nebraska vs California
September 12, 1998 • Berkeley, California

Score By Quarters

Cal	0	0	3	0	—	3
Nebraska	7	7	0	10	—	24

Team Stats

	Cal	NU
First Downs	9	24
Rushing	2	12
Passing	7	9
Penalty	0	3
Rushing Attempts	25	60
Yards Gained Rushing	53	290
Yards Lost Rushing	41	36
Net Yards Rushing	12	254
Net Yards Passing	224	180
Passes Attempted	32	28
Passes Completed	14	15
Had Intercepted	2	1
Total Plays	57	88
Total Net Yards	236	434
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.1	4.9
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties-Yards	9-53	4-29
Punts-Yards	9-344	7-293
Avg. Per Punt	38.2	41.9
Punt Returns-Yards	4-48	4-23
Interceptions-Yards	1-0	2-17
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	3-84	2-48
Possession Time	24:18	35:42



Eric Crouch followed up his solid rushing performance against UAB with a two-touchdown game at Cal.

Individual Leaders

NEBRASKA

RUSHING					
Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Makovicka, J.	14	83	5.9	23	0
Buckhalter, C.	12	71	5.9	29	0
Crouch, E.	16	59	3.7	30	2
Christo, M.	12	26	2.2	7	0
Alexander, D.	6	15	2.5	7	0

PASSING				
Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	6-16-1	37.5	74	0
Christo, M.	9-12-0	75.0	106	1

RECEIVING					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Wiggins, S.	7	97	13.9	36	1
Davison, M.	5	44	8.8	20	0
Jackson, S.	1	31	31.0	31	0
Debates, T.J.	1	11	11.0	11	0
Buckhalter, C.	1	-3	-3.0	-3	0

FIELD GOALS			
Name	Att.	Good	LNG
Brown, K.	2	1	41

PUNT RETURNS				
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG
Walker, J.	4	23	5.8	16

KICKOFF RETURNS				
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG
Wiggins, S.	1	32	32.0	32
Walker, J.	1	16	16.0	16

CALIFORNIA

RUSHING					
Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Fields, M.	8	30	3.8	11	0
White, J.	8	15	1.9	9	0
Davenport, R.	1	-2	-2.0	-2	0
Vedder, J.	7	-15	-2.1	3	0
Clemons, S.	1	-16	-16.0	-16	0

PASSING				
Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Vedder, J.	14-32-1	43.8	224	0

RECEIVING					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Douglas, D.	5	124	24.8	40	0
White, J.	4	15	3.8	10	0
Kunkle, A.J.	3	51	17.0	44	0
Davenport, R.	1	22	22.0	22	0
Smith, C.	1	12	12.0	12	0

FIELD GOALS			
Name	Att.	Good	LNG
Brache, I.	1	0	0
Wolleck, T.	1	1	38

PUNT RETURNS				
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG
O'Neal, D.	4	48	12.0	18

KICKOFF RETURNS				
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG
O'Neal, D.	2	65	32.5	49
Douglas, D.	1	19	19.0	19

'98 SEASON STATS

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	3	50	310	103.3	2
Makovicka, J.	3	32	145	38.3	1
Alexander, D.	3	17	62	20.7	1
Wiggins, S.	2	4	32	16.0	0
Crouch, E.	2	17	65	32.5	2
Christo, M.	2	15	37	18.5	0
Miller, W.	1	3	24	8.0	1
Brown, L.	1	1	13	13.0	0
Newcombe, B.	1	12	12	1.0	2
London, F.	1	1	-2	-2.0	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	3	18-36-1	50.0	206	-1
Christo, M.	2	13-16-0	81.3	187	2
Newcombe, B.	1	9-10-0	90.0	188	1

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPG	TD
Davison, M.	3	8	70	8.8	23.3	0
Cheatham, K.	2	7	75	10.7	37.5	0
Wiggins, S.	1	7	97	13.9	97.0	1
Jackson, S.	3	6	158	26.3	52.7	2
Buckhalter, C.	3	5	27	5.4	9.0	0
Debates, T.J.	2	2	27	13.5	13.5	0
Wstrom, T.	1	1	63	63.0	63.0	1
Makovicka, J.	2	1	17	17.0	8.5	0
Brown, L.	1	1	11	11.0	11.0	0
Haafke, B.	1	1	6	6.0	6.0	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, K.	3	3	2	41

DEFENSE

Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Johnson, E.	2	6	8	14	0	0	0
Brown, M.	2	8	7	15	0	0	0
Brown, R.	2	7	2	9	0	0	0
Swiney, E.	2	6	4	10	0	0	0
Foreman, J.	2	4	8	12	0	0	5-3
Kelsay, C.	2	9	3	12	1-4	0	1-10
Walker, J.	2	5	6	10	1-5	0	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	2	5	1	6	1-5	0	1-13
Wills, A.	1	2	1	3	0	0	0
Warren, S.	2	3	2	5	0	0	0
Wiltz, J.	1	0	2	2	0	1	0
Jackson, J.	2	2	2	4	0	0	1-9
Reynolds, K.	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
Kaiser, L.	2	3	4	7	0	0	2-7
Ortiz, T.	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Vedral, M.	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Raymond, S.	2	2	0	2	0	0	0
Rucker, M.	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Toline, T.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Polk, C.	1	1	0	1	1-3	0	0
Craver, K.	1	1	1	2	0	0	0
Shaw, B.	1	5	5	10	0	0	0
Lohr, J.	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
Slechts, J.	1	1	1	2	0	0	5-3
Hogrefe, Q.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Beveridge, T.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0

TEAM STATISTICS

Total Offensive Yards	1340	1015				
Plays	221	203				
Average Per Play	6.1	5.0				
Average Per Game	436.7	338.3				
Net Rushing Yards	779	145				
Attempts	159	95				
TDs Rushing	12	1				
Net Passing Yards	561	870				
Attempts	62	114				
Completions	40	68				
Average Per Pass	9.0	7.6				
Average Per Catch	14.0	12.8				
Average Per Game	187.0	290.0				
TDs Passing	4	4				
Sacks By-Yards	3-26	1-6				
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	3-0				
Penalties-Yards	9-78	21-141				
Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
NU	28	42	7	41	0	118
Opponents	0	13	18	6	0	37



The Nebraska defense limited Cal to just 12 net yards rushing.



Best view of Charlie's
fade away jumper.

Best view of
Cisco getting nasty
in the paint.

Best view of Nicole
setting a pick.

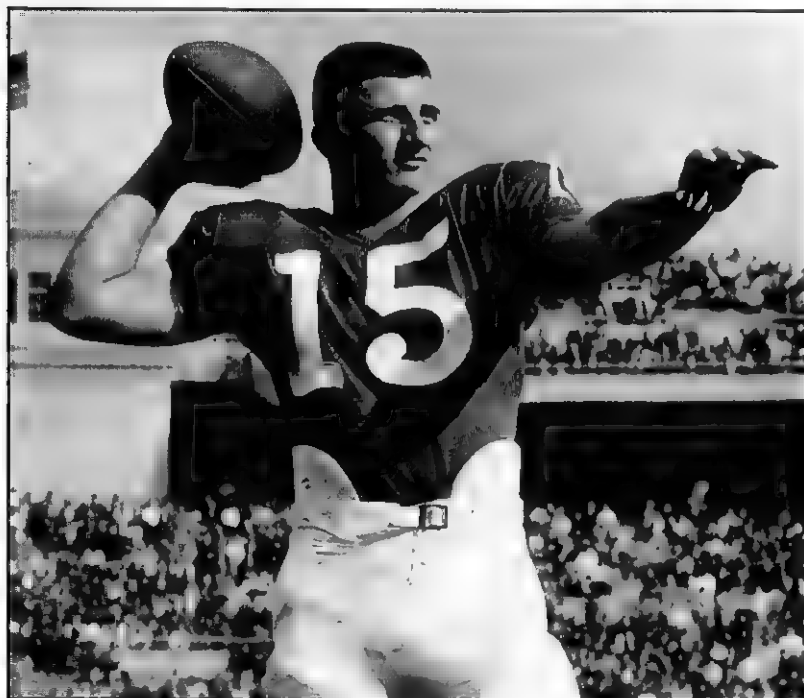
Closest to the
bathroom.

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Nebrasketball

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



NU's Top 10 QBs...

A fluke injury to starter Fred Duda in 1964 opened the door for the player who would become the first Nebraska quarterback to pass for 1,000 yards in a season

Bob CHURCHICH

Bob Churchich was a beneficiary of circumstance, you could say.

The circumstance was a broken leg, suffered by Fred Duda early in the first half of the Nebraska-Iowa State game at 23,100-seat Clyde Williams Field in Ames, Iowa, in October of 1964.

Duda, a junior, was Nebraska's No. 1 quarterback. Churchich, a sophomore, was competing for back-up playing time with, among others, Doug Tucker, a senior and two-year letterman.

As Duda was carried from the field, Nebraska coach Bob Devaney gave Churchich instructions and sent him in. "The game was tight," Churchich would recall many years later. "Why he picked me, I don't know, and I never really asked. Everybody has those little things happen to them."

Whatever the reason, the passing of time showed the wisdom of Devaney's decision.

Churchich came on to direct a 14-7 victory that afternoon in Ames and launch a career in which he would become the most prolific passer in Nebraska history — to that point. He still ranks eighth in career passing

offense behind an unbalanced line. "We just optioned off the fullback, not the triple option, fake to the fullback and read the end," he said. "The only read was on the end. The quarterback would keep or pitch."

Mike Corgan, who was known as "Iron Mike," still coached the quarterbacks for Devaney then. Tom Osborne

Just 12 years after Churchich passed for a school record 1,136 yards, his season's total didn't rank among Nebraska's all-time top 10. That's how dramatically the offense evolved.

with 2,434 yards and 15 touchdowns, on 179-of-342 attempts (52.3 percent).

Churchich was the first Cornhusker to pass for 1,000 yards in a season, completing 96-of-174 for 1,136 yards and four touchdowns as a senior in 1966. Just 12 years later, however, his season's total didn't rank among Nebraska's all-time top 10. That's how dramatically the offense was evolving.

Frank Patrick broke his record the next season, passing for 1,449 yards and seven touchdowns on 116-of-233 attempts. Patrick ranked 12th in the nation in passing in 1967. But Nebraska was 6-4.

When Churchich arrived in Lincoln from Omaha (North), the Cornhuskers ran an option

had yet to become a full-time assistant and worked only with the receivers.

Duda was suited to such an offense, having run the same thing at Weber High in Chicago. At 170 pounds, Churchich was 15 pounds lighter than Duda, who was more of a thrower than a runner.

Churchich had a strong right arm, which served him well as a third baseman. In fact, more major college recruiters were interested in him as a baseball player than as a football player.

Devaney promised he could play both sports, providing he became the No. 1 quarterback.

"I don't think he figured I would be the starting quarterback," said Churchich, who was a second-team All-America selection and led the Big Eight in hitting in conference games

FIELD GENERALS

Dennis Claridge	1961-63
Bob Churchich	1964-66
Jerry Tagge	1969-71
Dave Humm	1972-74
Vince Ferragamo	1975-76
Turner Gill	1980-83
Steve Taylor	1985-88
Gerry Gdowski	1987-89
Tommie Frazier	1992-95
Scott Frost	1996-97

(.386) his senior season.

By then, Churchich had completed his football eligibility and rewritten the passing section of the Cornhusker record book, even though he spent most of his junior season as Duda's backup.

Churchich finished out the 1964 season as the starter, directing Nebraska to the Big Eight championship, despite a 17-7 loss at Oklahoma in the final game, and a trip to the Cotton Bowl, where No. 2-ranked Arkansas scored in the fourth quarter for a 10-7 victory.

The Arkansas defense, which included current Miami Dolphins coach Jimmy Johnson at middle guard and Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones as the starting right guard on offense, limited Churchich to 8-of-15 passing for 68 yards, and held Nebraska to 168 yards of total offense.

But few other Cornhusker opponents were as successful in stopping his passes. He broke the school passing yardage record set by Dennis Claridge in 1962, completing 54-of-102 attempts for 893 yards and seven touchdowns, all of which came on plays of 30 yards or longer.

The longest was a school record 92-yarder to Freeman White. A year later, Duda and White would team on a 95-yard touchdown pass, which remains the longest in Nebraska history.

Ironically, Churchich began the 1965 season as the starter, but lost the job after Duda came on to replace him in the Iowa State game because the Cornhusker offense had gotten off to a sluggish start.

Duda remained the starter but needed relief help from Churchich in the final regular-season game against Oklahoma. Churchich came on after the Sooners had taken a 9-0 first-quarter lead and directed two touchdown drives on the way to a 21-9 victory, which gave Nebraska a 10-0 record.

The Cornhuskers went to Miami ranked No. 3 in both major wire service polls and, as it turned out, had a shot at a national championship if they could have defeated No. 4-ranked Alabama.

They couldn't, however, losing to Bear Bryant's Crimson Tide, 39-28.

Churchich did the best he could, again coming off the bench to replace Duda and completing 12-of-17 passes for 232 yards and an Orange Bowl-record three touchdowns.

The loss was the only one in Duda's career as a starter, in high school or

10 QUESTIONS

Huskers Illustrated talks with free safety MIKE BROWN

1 Where did you learn how to tackle?

It's just something that's pretty much natural. I've been playing defensive back all my life, and it's fun for me to tackle. I work hard at it because it's fun for me. My favorite part of the game is hitting people. Being physical, that's the way the game should be played.

2 What's your favorite moment at Nebraska?

The victory over Tennessee in (last season's) Orange Bowl. It was Tom Osborne's last game, and I was a part of history since I was coached by him. Just having the opportunity to play under Coach Osborne has probably been the biggest thrill.

3 Do you ever go anywhere without Ralph Brown (no relation)?

Yes. People joke around, like if you see one of us, the other is right behind. We're good friends, and we do a lot together, but we also do our own thing.

4 Who's the teammate you most dread tackling?

I really haven't got the opportunity to tackle Dan Alexander yet, but I think he's probably the hardest person to tackle on the team, just because he's so powerful. When you hit him, you go backward no matter where you hit him.

5 Is there a player you try to emulate?

I've never really thought about that. I do have some guys I like to watch play like (safety) Darren Woodson of the Dallas Cowboys. He's my type of player; he tackles well and it seems like he's a big-play type of guy and a pretty good leader.

6 Who do you prefer — Mark McGwire or Sammy Sosa?

McGwire. I just like the way he goes about the whole thing. He's been professional about it. I think most people want to see him do it because all the pressure was put on him to do it in the beginning.

7 If you weren't a football player, what would you want to do?

Probably play baseball. It's a more laid-back sport. It's a lot of fun just to be out there. It seems like the baseball guys make fun of each other more . . . it's just fun to be out there and run around outside all the time.

8 What's your opinion on the system being used to determine the national champion?

I think it's fine. I like it now that the No. 1 and No. 2 teams are going to be playing for the national championship. I think that's the way it should be. And I like the bowl games, because the bowls are fun. To get rid of the bowl games would be disappointing.

9 What's your favorite thing about Lincoln? (Long pause) . . . No comment.

10 Better luck with the ladies, you or Ralph?

Me. Most definitely. No doubt about it. I'm a better all-around guy than Ralph.



Contrary to popular opinion, Mike Brown (right) and Ralph Brown do go their separate ways from time to time.

college.

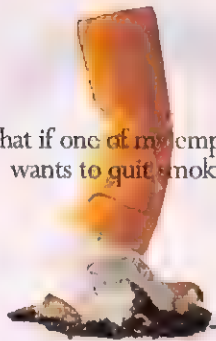
Churchich's senior season had a similarly frustrating finish. Nebraska won nine consecutive games and moved up to fourth in the *Associated Press* rankings before losing at unranked Oklahoma 10-9 and then falling in a Sugar Bowl game rematch against No. 3-ranked Alabama, 34-7.

Again, the Crimson Tide struck swiftly, taking a 14-0 lead midway

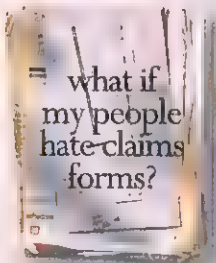
through the first quarter and forcing Nebraska to pass in a futile attempt to catch up. Churchich completed 21-of-34 passes for 201 yards and the lone touchdown, a 15-yarder to fullback Dick Davis early in the fourth quarter.

"You win three Big Eight championships but don't win any of the bowl games," Churchich once said, recalling the only major disappointment in his distinguished career. ■

what if one of my employees
wants to quit smoking?



what if
my people
hate claims
forms?



what if?

what if?

what if I want to cover retirees?



what if we have people



what if?



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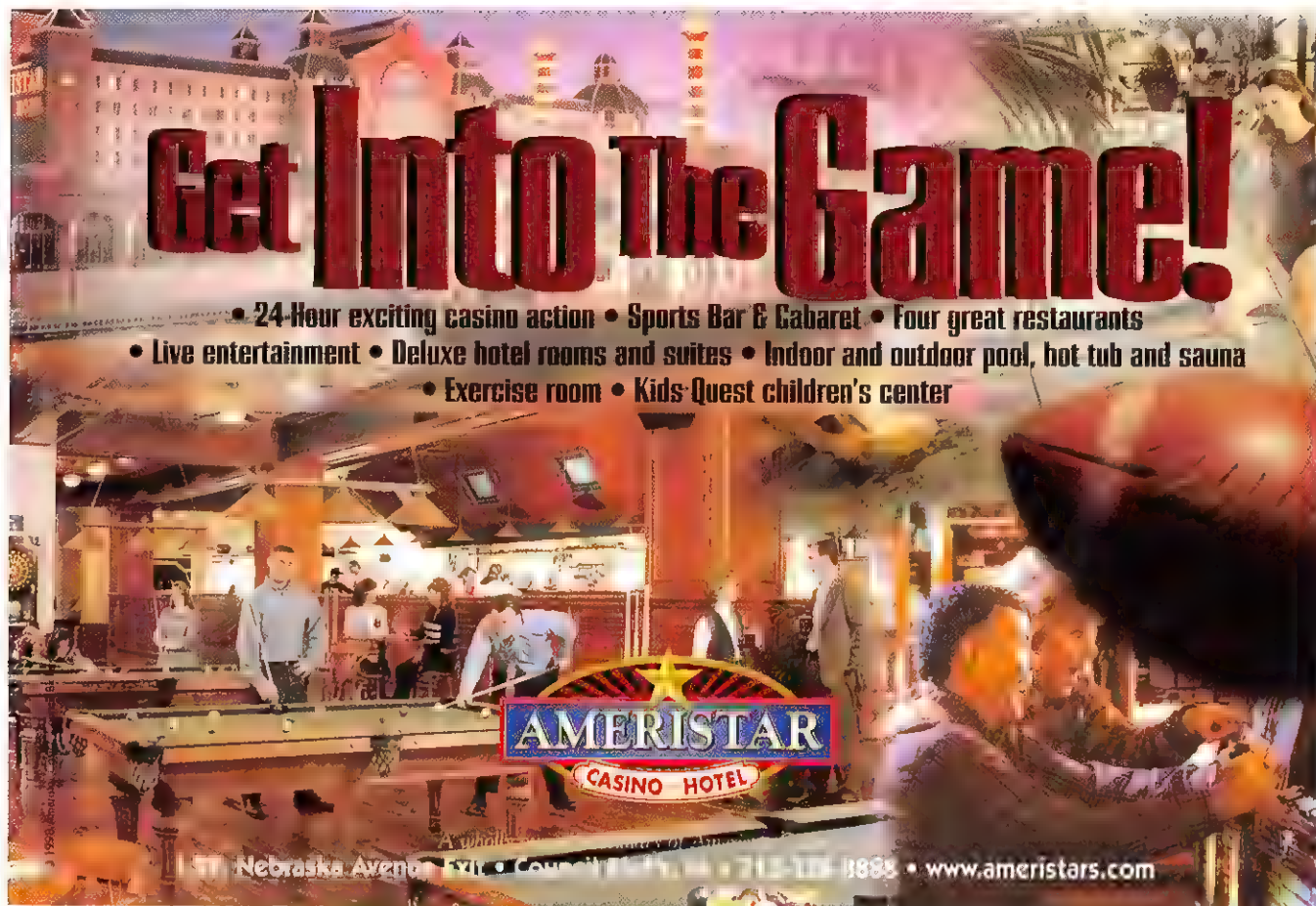
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or 56th & Hwy 2
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George Darlington was among the featured interviewees at the weekly news conference on the Tuesday after Nebraska's season-opening victory against Louisiana Tech.

Being acknowledged is nice, if it's for the right reason. This, however, was not.

Darlington took his place in front of the television cameras and reporters.

"Shoot away," he said, not meaning the words to be taken literally.

"What did you learn?" he was immediately asked.

The "from" was implicit in the question. What had he learned from a game in which Louisiana Tech's Tim Rattay had passed for 590 yards, including 405 of them to wide receiver Troy Edwards?

Edwards' total was an NCAA Division I-A single-game record, and the 590 yards shattered the previous passing high against a Nebraska defense of 489 yards by Kansas State in 1993. Louisiana Tech's remarkable effort "obviously is the reason I'm here," Darlington said, drawing laughter.

Darlington was able to laugh along, for one thing, because the defensive backs he coaches had given their best effort, and for another because the Cornhuskers had won by 29 points.

Defensive coaches, of necessity, are bottom-line people, which is how those who play for them also have to be. Darlington regularly reminds his defensive backs of that.

When something goes awry, as obviously it did in the Louisiana Tech victory, "you try to explain what they already know: 'Hey, this is our style of defense, and if you're going to be out there by yourself, you have to learn to develop a tremendously tough skin,'" said Darlington.

"You have to not worry about what you hear on the talk show or somebody saying you're no good and recognize as a part of the team, you're given that responsibility, and occasionally you're going to fail. But ultimately, if the team succeeds, the fact that people are saying you're a dog, the you-can't-cover-me type of thing, just ignore it. Just say: 'Well, here's the ring. It's a pretty nice ring.'"

Except for cornerback Keyuo Craver, a true freshman, Nebraska's defensive backs all have national

championship rings, evidence the Cornhusker defensive philosophy is solid.

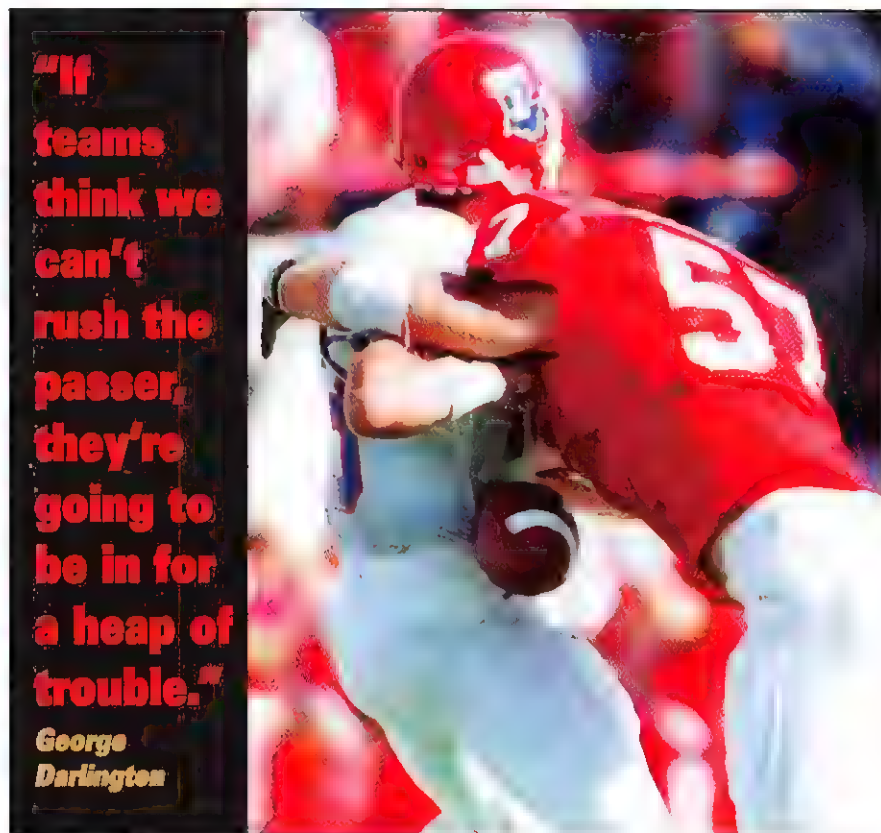
Using that approach, with most of the same players, Nebraska limited Tennessee's Peyton Manning to his second-lowest passing yardage total of the season in the 1998 Orange Bowl game.

Manning completed 21-of-31 passes for 134 yards and one touchdown,

deep ball. If we can't live with that, we will completely revamp our defense.

"We live by the sword, if you will; we die by the sword in those situations."

The figurative sword to which he referred is man-to-man pass coverage, an essential element of Nebraska's attacking 4-3 base defense. When a cornerback in such coverage is matched against a receiver with 4.4



Scott Bruhn

VIDEO GAMES

It wasn't *Titanic* that Washington's offensive minds were watching in the weeks leading up to Saturday's showdown — it was a video from the Louisiana Tech game • By Mike Babcock

with one interception. His lowest total of the season was a 126-yard effort against South Carolina.

Whether you do what you did against Manning, or endure what you endured against Rattay, Darlington told the defensive backs, "you focus on things the same way . . . we know occasionally we're going to give up the

speed, he's "occasionally going to give up the deep ball," Darlington said.

Even though that might have seemed less of a problem when the Cornhuskers played zone coverage behind a 5-2 front, "a good passing team will eat up a zone," defensive coordinator Charlie McBride has said. "It was hard to get rid of the zone until

the one-back sets. Then it really got ugly."

Sophisticated passing offenses were particularly troublesome in bowl games.

Miami's Bernie Kosar, for example, completed 19-of-35 passes for 300 yards and two touchdowns in the Hurricanes' 31-30 upset in the 1984 Orange Bowl game. "In past years, we probably had a chance to win a couple of (more) championships," McBride said during two-a-days. "But because of our defensive speed and partly because of philosophy, we just couldn't get the job done in big games."

Two of the top 10 passing yardage totals against Nebraska also came in bowls, both by Florida State in the Fiesta Bowl. The Seminoles' Peter Tom Willis passed for 422 yards in a 41-17 victory in the 1990 game and Danny McManus threw for 375 yards in a 31-28 victory in the 1988 game.

The Cornhuskers lost only one other game on that top 10 list. Texas quarterback James Brown passed for 353 yards in the 1996 Big 12 championship game, won by the Longhorns 37-27.

By 1996, of course, Nebraska had made a successful transition to a 4-3 base defense, and had already won two national championships with it. A key was recruiting speed in the secondary.

"When I first came here, we played a lot of zone," said McBride, who became the defensive coordinator in 1982, succeeding Lance Van Zandt. "We always had good hitters (in the secondary), tough kids, walkons who could hit. When we were playing zone, we never looked for speed."

"We played tough walkons who would hit you," he said. The philosophy of secondary play, in oversimplified terms, was, "come up, hit 'em and hope the ball comes out."

In passing situations, the Cornhuskers would substitute an extra defensive back in a "nickel" package, creating a time problem in practice. They practiced one at the expense of the other. They still make situational substitutions. But the 4-3 base defense has been sound against both run and pass.

Nebraska doesn't lack defensive speed. The concern is keeping it under control. "We go out and recruit the fastest players we can and then we teach them how to slow up," Darlington said.

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In the Louisiana Tech game, "in most cases, our players were too aggressive, not too passive," he said. "There were numerous passes caught behind the line of scrimmage that could have resulted in minus-1 or minus-2 (yards in losses) but in some cases (they) resulted in as much as plus-25 (yards)."

Near the end of its first touchdown drive — 80 yards on 16 plays, 14 of them passes — Louisiana Tech faced

third-and-4 at the Cornhusker 12-yard line. "They threw a flare pass, and our player attacked the flare pass, over-ran it," said Darlington. The receiver scrambled for seven yards.

"So some of our problems really revolved around over-running things and hustle."

Had the tackle been made and the first down prevented, Louisiana Tech probably would have settled for a field goal instead of scoring the touchdown

on fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line.

Darlington calls such plays stoppers. "Whether it's stopping a third-down-and-1 running play or a third-down play on a pass, you've got to come up with the stoppers," he said. "Another way to think about it is, there are maybe 13 drives per game, the opponent gets the ball x number of times, probably 13.

"If you come up with 13 plays (one

CLINT FINLEY

He has shown the physical and mental abilities to be an outstanding defensive back. The key for him is to get healthy and stay that way.

Clint Finley made the trip to Seattle for last season's Washington game. He stood on the sideline at Husky Stadium, "buckled up and ready to go," he said. "All I needed was the word."

The word would have come from secondary coach **George Darlington** by way of graduate assistant **Jon Bostick**. Darlington is in the pressbox during games. Bostick is on the sideline.

"I came close (to going in) a couple of times, just whenever there was a little confusion on the field," Finley said. "Coach thought about putting me in. But he didn't have to."

Finley, Nebraska's No. 1 free safety, backed up senior **Eric Warfield** as a redshirt freshman a year ago. He had already missed the first two games because of a dislocated left elbow, suffered during preseason practice. He had just been cleared to play before the team left for Seattle.

"The coaches didn't know exactly how I would respond to contact. I guess they really needed a week of practice to see if I would stick my nose up in there after having a major injury," Finley said.

They needn't have been concerned. Finley finally got to play in his first collegiate game two weeks later, during the Cornhuskers' 56-26 victory against Kansas State. In addition to making three tackles, he delivered a crushing block on Joe Walker's 71-yard interception return for a touchdown.

It was immediately apparent that Finley hadn't lost his aggressiveness. By season's end, he had started one game — against Oklahoma — and earned a reputation as one of the team's hardest hitters.

A year later, Finley was back on the sideline for the opening game. More specifically, he was sitting in the east stadium stands, along with the parents of many of his teammates.

The elbow was fine. But he had suffered a sprain of his right knee. So while the rest of the team prepared to play

Louisiana Tech, Finley rehabilitated his knee.

Finley's absence forced Darlington to adjust the secondary. Junior **Mike Brown** moved from rover to free safety, and sophomore **Joe Walker**, the No. 1 "nickel back," started at rover.

The injuries have been "frustrating," Finley said. "But luckily for me they've both come at the beginning of the season, and it's nice to know they're not season-ending injuries. Two years in a row I've missed the opener. That's what you look forward to all summer long. It's a big debut for you.

"And it's unfortunate when you watch from the stands."

Watching from the stands, which he also did as a redshirt his first season at Nebraska, is contrary to Finley's nature. His dad, **Mickey**, was his high school coach in Cuero, Texas, and "ever since I could walk, I've been down on the field, being a water boy, a tee boy, a ball boy, whatever," said Finley.

"I've never watched from the stands. I did a little bit my redshirt year and that was really hard on me. I've got to be around it, one way or the other. And I always will be, whether coaching or playing."

Finley, who was recruited as a quarterback, has an appreciation for football's intricacies, characteristic of a coach's son. He's a student of the game. And that serves him well at defensive back.

Safety has unique demands. It's like a quarterback in the secondary. "You've got to make the checks and everything back there," Finley said. "A lot of the rest of the defense is pretty much depending on you, so I'd say you have to be as smart of a football player as you possibly can be."

Although his focus was rehabilitating his knee, Finley continued to prepare for the opener against Louisiana Tech as if he were going to play. He attended meetings and studied tape.

"I was ready to play mentally," he said. "I knew what was going on. I was reading signals. I knew what was happening during the game. I could watch from the stands and figure out what was going on."

Watching what was going on in the opener was particularly frustrating, for obvious reasons.

"It was killing me," said Finley. "I wanted to be out there to help my buddies.

"It was hard to watch. I wish I could have been out there to go through it with them. I don't know how much I could have been able to help, but I sure would have liked to have the opportunity."

Even though he's in his third year at Nebraska, he's still learning, "still getting comfortable to tell you the truth," he said. "I'm getting better and better as time goes by. You're never going to get totally comfortable. You have to adjust week by week to different things teams do." ■



Clint Finley

on each drive), you shut the opponent out."

The defensive backs don't have sole responsibility for stopping passing drives, of course. Whether or not they're successful depends on the players up front pressuring the passer.

Nebraska wasn't effective in doing that against Louisiana Tech, in part because of the Bulldogs' scheme. When he didn't line up in a shotgun formation, Rattay often took a single step drop.

Under such circumstances, "you're not going to sack the quarterback," Darlington said. However, "if teams think we can't rush the passer, they're going to be in for a heap of trouble because we've got some people who can rush the passer."

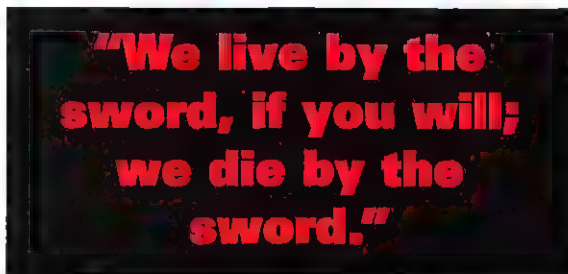
The Cornhuskers will have yet another opportunity to prove they can rush the passer when they go up against Washington. Passing is what Huskies quarterback Brock Huard does best.

Huard, who was sidelined by a severe ankle sprain early in last year's game at Seattle, threw only eight passes, completing four for 29 yards before

giving way to Marques Tuiasosopo.

For the season, Huard completed 146-of-244 passes for 2,140 yards and 23 touchdowns, with only 10 interceptions. He's a year more mature now, and presents a formidable challenge.

Washington's top receivers of a year ago have departed. The Huskies



don't have anyone to compare to Edwards. "But quite honestly, most of the people we play have a guy who approaches his ability, or two guys," Darlington said during a news conference before the Alabama-Birmingham game.

"I'm not saying they're (going to be) exactly as good as No. 16 (Edwards).

"By the same token, we're not

going to all of a sudden go the next, hopefully, 13 games and every team we play will have a bunch of stiffies that can't run and can't move."

Even though it was ultimately no match for the Cornhuskers, Louisiana Tech showed what an exceptional quarterback with an extraordinary receiver and a sound offensive system can accomplish. "The concept they have in their pass offense is very good," Darlington said.

"First of all, they wear you out on screens to try to negate your pass rush when they do hold the ball a little bit. They try to get you tired. Then they try to get a great athlete the ball, one-on-one.

"We're dirty like that, too, with our offense. We pitch the ball to a great I-back in the crease, and there's one defender against the running back. Often times, the running back is going to win. The bottom line is, we have to make sure our guys win more of the battles than they (the opponents) do."

They're also going to lose some battles and get beat deep. That's simply a fact of life. ■

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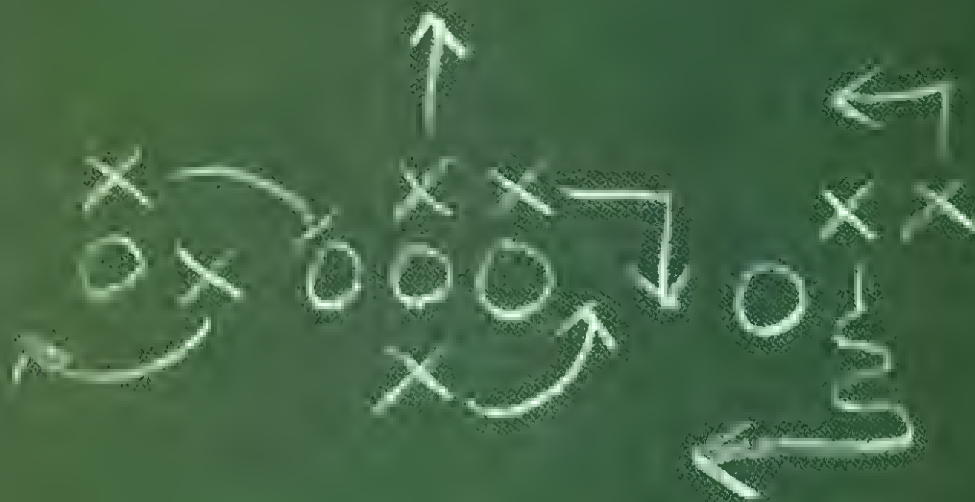
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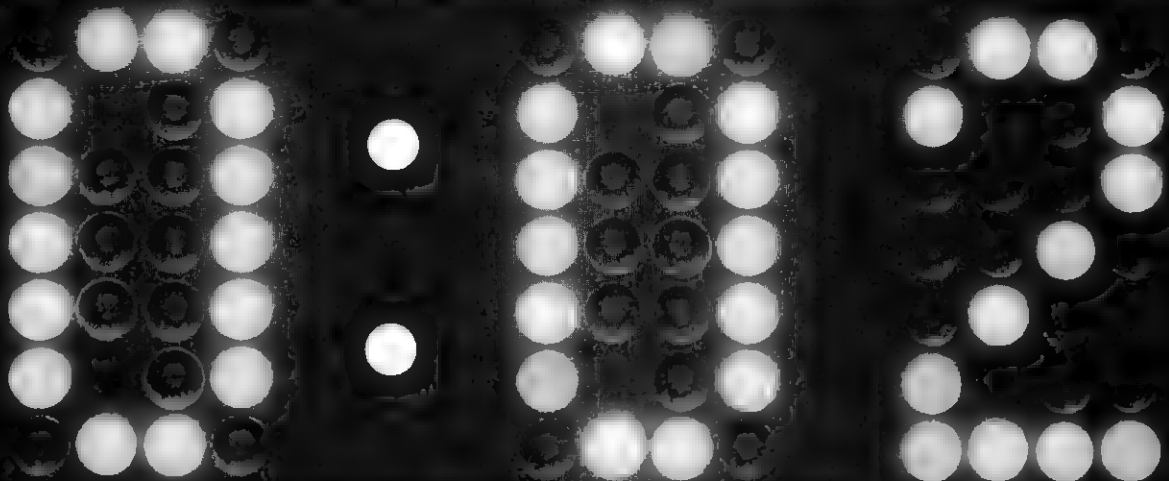
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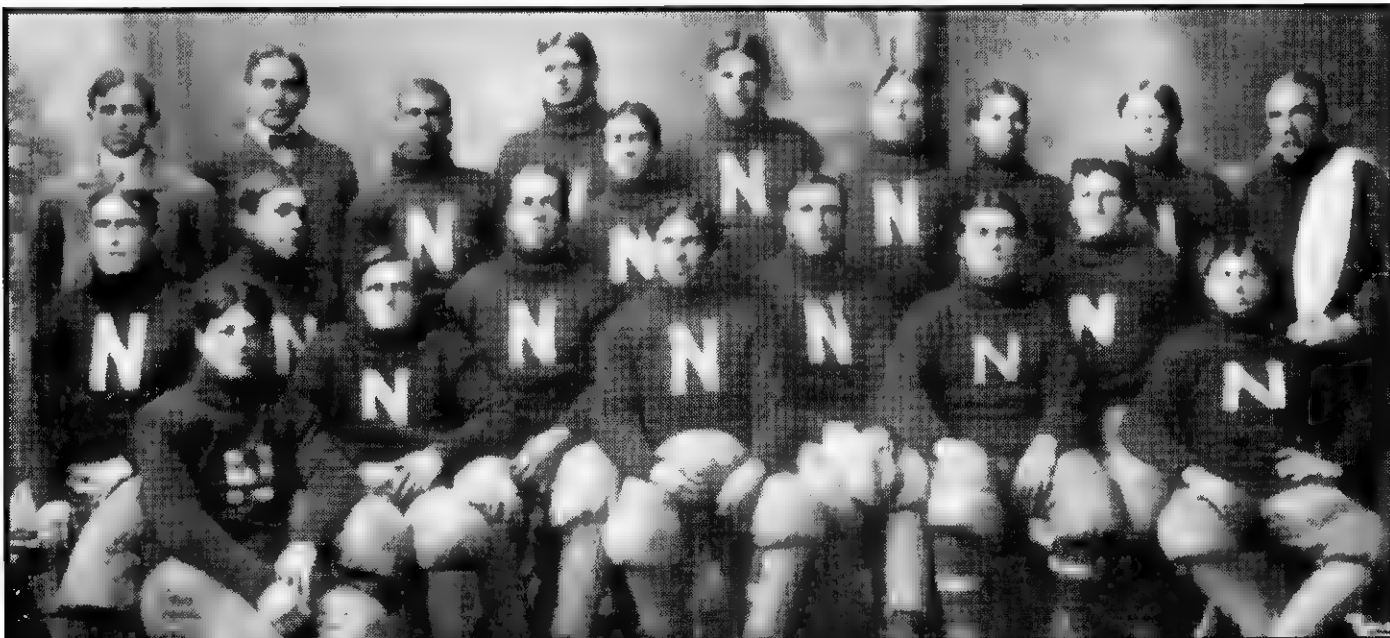
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You gotta have heart, which Joel Makovicka does. Consider Nebraska's Orange Bowl victory against Tennessee.

"He pretty much had a torn hamstring," Willie Miller said. "I mean, the guy mustered up enough courage, he had enough heart that he was able to play until we were sure of a victory."

"He had to be in a ton of pain. He might have some kind of bump and bruise that your regular guy would be on the sideline, but no, he's out there. He's got that dedication to the team."

Makovicka helped clear the way for I-back Ahman Green to rush for an Orange Bowl-record 206 yards with his crushing blocks, and he contributed 61 rushing yards on only nine carries.

The blocks were expected, the rushing yards a bonus. Blocking is at least 70 to 75 percent of playing fullback at Nebraska, according to Miller, a sophomore fullback from Bellevue West.

The percentage might be even higher. "You've got to know how to block, and you've got to be a good blocker," Miller said. "If you don't, then you're not going to play. You might come in every once in a while, maybe run the ball if you're a runner. But you won't start because it's all based on blocking."

"That's the main purpose of the fullback here, to be a good blocker."

No one will dispute that. The Cornhuskers' option offense is based on that principle. But fullbacks such as Makovicka have provided an added dimension by posing a serious running threat.

Barring injury, the walkon from tiny East Butler High in Brainard, Neb., should climb to second on Nebraska's all-time rushing list for fullbacks by season's end. And depending on how often he gets to carry the ball, he could reach the top. Andra Franklin is currently the leader, with 1,738 career yards.

Makovicka carried 10 times for 47 yards in the opening victory against Louisiana Tech to surpass 1,000 yards for his career and move ahead of Lance Lewis and Frank Solich, his coach.

Entering the Cal game, he needed just 36 yards to pass Jerry Brown and move into fifth place on the list.

Makovicka is an integral part of the Cornhuskers' running game and not

Men At Work: Joel Makovicka (45) does what he does best as he clears a path for I-back Correll Buckhalter.

only as a blocker. "A great fullback such as Joel just opens up the option game," said quarterback Bobby Newcombe.

"It mainly opens up a lot of plays on the wide side of the field, the outside game, because people have to respect Joel a lot. If they don't, then he's going to break it for a touch-down."

Makovicka scored nine touchdowns as a junior to tie the Nebraska single-season record for a fullback, established by Mark Schellen on the "Scoring Explosion" team in 1983.

The first of the nine came on a 20-yard, highlight-film run against Akron. He scored three against Oklahoma to set a Cornhusker single-game record for a fullback.

"The thing about Joel is he can do just about anything," Newcombe said.

"He's a great blocker, he can catch the ball real well and he can run the ball real well. You have to respect him in game situations because, basically, he can single-handedly beat you. And if you focus on him too much, we have other people on offense who can beat you themselves."

Nebraska coaches couldn't have known for sure that Makovicka would bring such a dimension to the position. If they had, they would have offered him a scholarship instead of encouraging him to walk on.

Whatever the questions were, they have since been answered. Makovicka has earned comparisons with the best fullbacks in Cornhusker history, including Tom Rathman, who is arguably the best. Rathman also posed a running threat, gaining a fullback-record 881 yards as a senior in 1985.

"When you're looking for a fullback, you want the complete package, a guy who not only is big enough and physical enough to do the kind of blocking it takes, but who can also be a threat running," said running backs coach Dave Gillespie. "The problem is, you don't always find that combination."

"I don't think we would say, 'hey, we'll take a guy who can't get to places on options and get safeties cut off, cut linebackers and do those kinds of things, isolate linebackers,' because that's so much a part of our offense. Obviously, the aspect of the fullback running the ball is not a great part of the plan."



King

**The fullback position is r
in determining the succe**

by Mike Babcock

"But it certainly is a great complement to have a fullback who can do that. It makes the offense a lot tougher to defend when you have a threat there. Our offense is so difficult to defend, even without a running fullback, that when you throw in that dimension, it makes it even tougher."

"If you have a fullback who's not a very good runner, the times he has the ball in his hands are going to go down,



Scott B. Smith

ys Of Block

**ot always glamorous, but it might be the most important position
ss of Nebraska's powerful offense**

naturally," said Solich, who rushed for a Nebraska single-game fullback record 204 yards in 1965. "But we look for a guy there who's a threat running as well as blocking."

The reason is obvious. "That gives us the complete offense," he said.

Washington's defense can attest to that. Makovicka rushed for a career-high 129 yards on only 12 carries in last season's 27-14 victory against the

Huskies in Seattle.

Makovicka was a running back in high school, rushing for 3,500 yards during his eight-man career. He could fill in at I-back for the Cornhuskers in a pinch. He could play I-back in many programs.

"In our offense, we wouldn't necessarily look for an I-back who didn't have 4.4, 4.5 type of speed (in the 40-yard dash)," said Gillespie, a former

Nebraska I-back himself (1974-76).

"I'm not sure Mak is quite that fast. So from a speed standpoint, maybe he wouldn't quite fit the prototype of what we would look for as an I-back. But I have no doubt that if we lined up Mak at I-back, he would be proficient for us. We might lack a little bit in big plays, but we wouldn't lack in getting all the yardage we could out of a play. I don't know how he would fit into

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other offenses."

And even though he's not a burner, "he seems to run fast enough," Gillespie said.

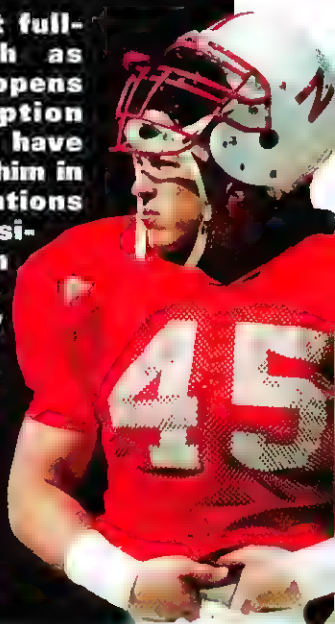
Makovicka was fast enough to break runs of 43, 38 and 37 yards last season.

The running threat at fullback has been, to some degree, by design. As Nebraska's option evolved, "I think we probably did about as good a job as anybody in college football of getting a lot of production out of the fullback spot carrying the ball," former coach Tom Osborne said recently.

Solich agreed.

"Most teams around the country, if the fullback gets any carries — and there are some that operate out of a two-back set where the fullback doesn't get any carries — it's in single-

"A great full-back such as Joel just opens up the option game. You have to respect him in game situations because basically, he can single-handedly beat you."
— Husker Quarterback Bobby Newcombe on the importance of the fullback



digit numbers. Our fullbacks usually average around 10 to 13 carries a game, and those are important carries."

The fullbacks had 13 carries in the Louisiana Tech game. In addition to Makovicka's 10, Miller rushed three times for 24 yards and one touchdown, on an 8-yard run early in the second quarter.

He also made a block on which he drove his man back and then buried him.

The 6-foot, 230-pound Miller played in a single-back offense in high school and "kind of fell in love with running the ball," he said. He led the state's large-schools class in rushing as a senior with 1,527 yards and 18 touchdowns. "I didn't really care for block-

ing at all, to tell you the truth.

"But I talked with Coach Solich and he thought I had the good mentality. I just needed somebody to coach me on how to block, and he felt he could get the job done. Sure enough, I come down here and before I know it, he's kind of got me in shape to where I'm doing decently on my blocks."

Solich, who coached the running backs for 15 years under Tom Osborne before taking over as head coach, also let Miller know he would have an opportunity to carry the ball. "So that whole thing sounded really good to me," said Miller.

Makovicka also contributed significantly to his development as a blocker.

"It was tough," Miller said. "It's a totally different thing than just running the ball all the time. You've got to run in there and pound away, and I wasn't used to that. I just really had to look to people who were kind of my mentors, and that was Joel, pretty much. I watched him, saw his techniques."

He also found himself constantly asking questions, which Makovicka readily answered.

"Thank God Joel is a good person, so he was helping me out on everything. I'd have to say a lot of my improvement has come from him, having him helping me out a lot," said Miller.

Billy Legate "had a good bit to do with it, too," he said. "Both of them."

Perfection in blocking can never be achieved, according to Miller.

"Every day is a new day," he said. "You never have it fully down on the blocks. You kind of get to feeling pretty good with them, but it takes a long time before you're 100 percent every single time. Everybody makes mistakes."

"So the whole time you're here, you're learning."

Technique is only about 50 percent of effective blocking, Miller said. The other 50 percent is aggressiveness and attitude.

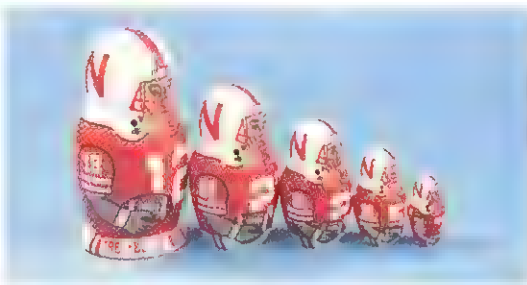
"You've really got to have the heart to be able to sit in there when you've got a guy 255 pounds or so coming in. You're going 100 percent, and you're going to meet."

"You have to know your techniques, get your pads low, get up underneath the guy. But first of all, you have to have the heart to go in there."

Makovicka has the heart. And so does Miller. ■

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Been There, Done That

Hailing from the same high school as Lisa Reitsma, Nancy Meendering is already used to filling big shoes on the volleyball court

By Todd HENRICH

Nancy Meendering can recall only one time when she didn't follow in Lisa Reitsma's footsteps.

After all, both were high school players of the year at Hull (Western Christian), Iowa. With powerful left-handed swings in tow, both came to Nebraska on volleyball scholarships.

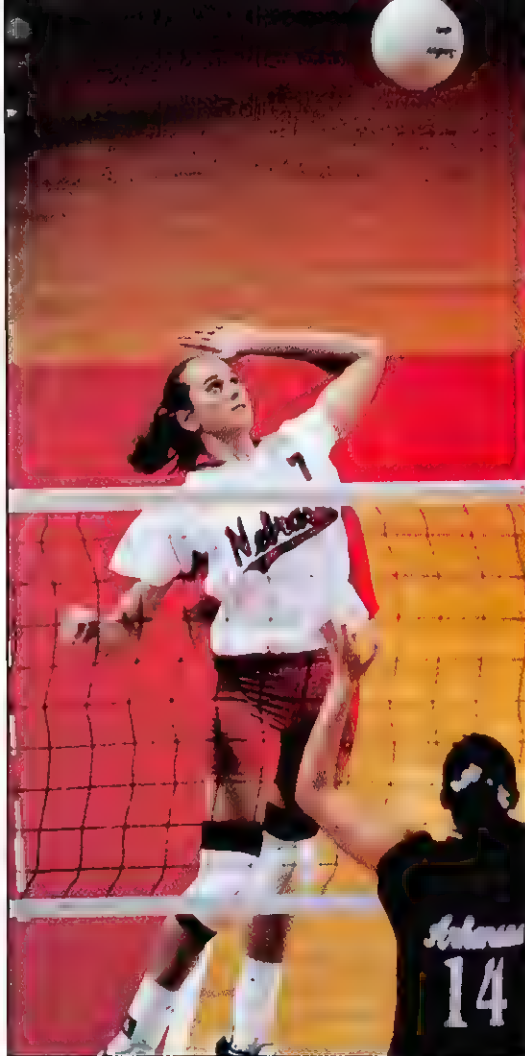
"I was just never prom queen," Meendering said.

Husker fans, however, are looking to the sophomore standout to lead Nebraska back to the "Big Dance" this fall. The Huskers, who fell one win shy of the Final Four a year ago, return five starters in their bid to reclaim the Big 12 Conference championship.

The missing link is Reitsma, a two-time first-team All-American, who in four years blasted 1,633 kills at NU, ranking second on the school's all-time list. She was Nebraska's lone senior last season when the Huskers finished 27-7.

Reitsma's likely replacement at right-side hitter is none other than Meendering (pronounced MAINE-dering), the player who replaced her as a sophomore in high school and went on to break her prep records for career kills and blocks.

There's no pressure, Meendering



LN Sports Information

said. She's been in these shoes before.

"With Lisa gone, there are shoes to fill and I hope I can fill them," Meendering said. "Ever since she was a senior in high school, I've always wanted to be like her. She's always been a role model and a hero to me, so to be able to follow in her footsteps is just an honor."

It is an honor and a necessity, at least if Nebraska hopes to challenge for a national title this fall. From Reitsma to Kelly Aspegren to Annie Adamczak to even Lori Endicott, the right-side hitter has been the I-back of Nebraska volleyball. When their backs are to the wall, that's often where the ball goes. And, as in football, the end result is usually a positive one.

"If you go down through the history of the program, it's always been a dynamic attacker at that position," said Nebraska coach Terry Pettit, now in his 22nd season. "Nancy may be the most physical player we've ever had. Great jumper. Fast twitch. She's 6-foot-2, but probably plays two or three inches above that."

But the thing you hear most about Meendering is how hard she can hit a volleyball. Meendering said it made

her blush when her high school coach used to say she could hit through just about any block. Now those words are coming from Pettit and many of her teammates, most of whom are happy to stay on the same side of the net.

All-American setter Fiona Nepo, a senior from Honolulu, spent part of the summer training in Colorado with the U.S. National Team. Back in Lincoln, however, she is one of Meendering's biggest backers.

"She hits the ball harder than I've ever seen and I've seen some other national team members out there who can really hit the ball," Nepo said. "I'm an emotional player and when somebody kills the shot out of the ball, it makes me happy. I like the physical play."

Surprisingly, Meendering doesn't credit her physical abilities or volleyball background for her powerful arm swing. She says a background in youth swimming could be part of the reason behind her destructive swing.

"I've been told that strong shoulders can carry over from that," Meendering said. "To me, it doesn't feel like I'm hitting it that hard, but people say that. It's kind of a nice thing to hear."

It's also nice for Meendering to know she won't have to carry the load alone this season. Bigger things are expected from senior middle blocker Megan Korver, as well as juniors Mandy Monson, Tonia Tauke and sophomore Katie Jahnke.

With Nepo's talent for distributing the ball, a balanced offense could keep Husker opponents off-balance all season. A year ago, Nebraska relied heavily on Reitsma and fell just short of a third straight trip to the Final Four.

"We probably have more talent, more experienced talent, than we had last year, so we will be more diversified," Pettit said. "One of the challenges for a coaching staff is to exploit the things you do really well. Lisa, particularly in 1996 but somewhat in '97, was playing with a pretty inexperienced team. For us to be successful,

Coach Terry Pettit says Meendering (above) could be "the most physical player we've ever had."

she needed to see the ball a lot of times."

Pettit and the Huskers experimented this spring and early fall with just how to use all of their big guns in 1998. In a ball-handling system, the coaches have worked Meendering as the middle attacker. The Huskers can also shake things up by bringing back-up setter Jill McWilliams into the lineup, freeing up Nepo to occasionally show her skills as an attacker.

Balance and versatility are important, but in the end, it could boil down to who produces when it counts.

"I don't think you compete for a Final Four if two or three players don't emerge as just really outstanding players," Pettit said. "That's the challenge."

Meendering showed tremendous potential as a freshman last year, even topping some of Reitsma's first-year marks at Nebraska.

In 24 matches, Meendering produced 46 kills and 16 block assists. Her best performance came in Nebraska's win at Baylor. Meendering peppered the Bears with 10 kills and posted an impressive .615 hitting percentage.

For the season, Meendering hit .208 and added 17 digs in limited back-row action.

In high school, Meendering delivered 1,485 career kills and 520 blocks for Western Christian, Iowa's Class 2A champion in 1994 and 1995. She also succeeded in other sports, setting Western Christian's single-season scoring record in basketball as a senior and earning state-meet medals in track running the 1,600 and distance medley relays.

Not surprisingly, Reitsma's resume reads much the same. In high school, she earned the *Des Moines Register's* Female Athlete of the Year award in 1993. As a freshman at NU, she had only 29 kills and six block assists but showed promise with a hitting percentage of .490.

Reitsma exploded onto the scene in 1995, Nebraska's national championship season. She earned first team All-America honors as a sophomore, and as a junior, set four Nebraska single-season records. In her career, she had nine matches of 25 or more kills, the most by any Husker in school history.

Like Reitsma, Meendering would like her sophomore season to be a breakthrough campaign. "I think that would be cool," she said.

Even better than being a prom queen. ■



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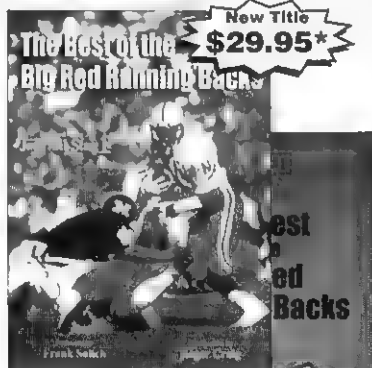
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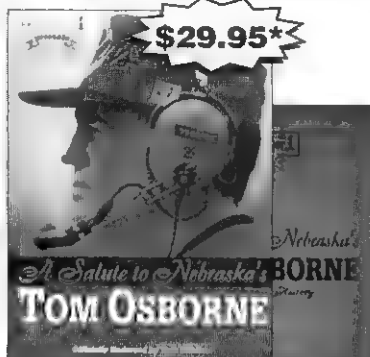


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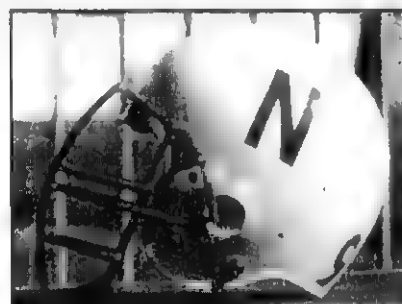
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RUMORS

Nebraska's biggest rival for early commitments in the Big 12 remains Texas. The Longhorns currently have 17 verbal commitments to the Cornhuskers seven, and they have also picked up an outstanding transfer during the first semester.

Linebacker **Adam McConthay** (6-foot-5, 226 pounds, with 4.5 speed in the 40-yard dash) of West Monroe, La., was rated as one of the top outside linebacker prospects in the country a year ago. A tremendous pass rusher, McConthay decided to play at LSU. However, things never clicked for McConthay and he recently left the Tigers and has decided to walk on at Texas.

McConthay, who will eventually be put on scholarship, is exactly what the Longhorns need as they continue to upgrade their team speed.

Missouri also added a third verbal commitment in quarterback **Darius Outlaw** (6-4 1/2, 190, 4.6) of Paulding County, Ga., who picked Missouri over South Carolina and Clemson. Outlaw passed for 1,200 yards and 11 touchdowns last season while running for another 800 yards.

Put down **Arnold Parker** (6-1, 195, 4.5) of Las Vegas (Cimarron), Nev., as another top running back prospect looking at Nebraska. Parker rushed for 1,934 yards and 28 touchdowns this past season. He also plays outside linebacker and cornerback.

Parker says he is talking with OU, Nebraska, Colorado and Arizona State and that he plans to visit the Cornhuskers after the season.

"Nebraska's tradition is the best in the country," said Parker. "They always win and are always on television. It would be a pleasure to go there."

Quarterback **Bobby Moore** (6-1, 190, 4.6) of Northport (Tuscaloosa County), Ala., has recently started looking at Nebraska. Moore is an excellent option operator who ran for 770 yards and six touchdowns last season while throwing for 966 yards and leading his team to a state championship.

Moore wants to go to a program that runs the option and Nebraska, North Carolina State and Mississippi State have offered scholarships.

Linebacker **Tim Olmstead** (6-4, 245, 4.7) of Kankakee (McNamara), Ill., recently indicated that Nebraska was one of this top three schools. Rated as one of the top linebackers in the Midwest, Olmstead has made over 100 tackles for two straight seasons. Notre Dame, Purdue and Nebraska are his top choices, with Kentucky and Illinois also in the picture. ■

Catching On To The Big Red Offense

Even though the Huskers don't pass very often, Nebraska's offense still appeals to wide receivers

By James HALE

The Nebraska recruiting juggernaut is continuing its annual raid on the nation's top talent. The first of week of September has passed and the Cornhuskers have already claimed their seventh verbal commitment toward their 1999 class. The seven are not the most in the country at this point, but they comprise an impressive collection of players. Much to the dismay of their Big 12 counterparts, the Cornhusker coaching staff has put together the makings of a solid class, which usually translates into a dominant football team in the future.

The latest to commit to the Huskers is **Ryon Bingham** (6-foot-4, 260 pounds, with 5.0 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Sandy (Alta), Utah, who figures to play defensive tackle at Nebraska. A three-year starter, Bingham can bench 410 pounds and

offered a scholarship at camp but was in early June. I didn't commit right away, but it didn't take me long thereafter."

Bingham has started at defensive tackle and this season is doubling at offensive tackle. Apparently, Alta High doesn't keep defensive stats, but Bingham is certain he had 13 sacks last season and says he probably had close to 100 tackles. He's also certain that Nebraska is the perfect school for him.

"I just like the program, players and coaches," said Bingham. "They also have the best team. I really like everything about Nebraska. I also like how they treat their freshman. They really make their freshman feel like part of the team."

Bingham chose Nebraska over Utah and BYU and gives the Huskers seven verbal commitments. Bingham joins a class of 1999 that includes running



Although receivers at Nebraska don't catch a large number of passes, they do get a chance to make big plays, like this touchdown reception by Shevin Wiggins in the Orange Bowl last season.

squat 530. He first attracted the attention of the Nebraska coaches at their football camp this past summer.

"I went to the summer camp and had a great time," said Bingham. "I guess I impressed them, too. I wasn't

back Josh Davis of Loveland, Colo., fullback Judd Davies of Omaha (Millard North), Neb., defensive back **Rob Blomeier** of Lancaster (Manheim Township), Pa., strong safety **Taylor Gehman** of Omaha (Northwest), Neb., offensive lineman **Chris Loos** of Lincoln (Southeast), Neb., and defen-

sive lineman **Phil Peetz** of Elkhorn, Neb.

One position that the Huskers have yet to receive a commitment from is wide receiver. Many times, the Huskers fall into a great athlete just as often as they go out and snag a super pure wide receiver who came to Lincoln for the sole purpose of catching a touchdown a game. Granted, the Husker wide receiver core is good. In fact, the Cornhuskers may have as many game breakers at the position now than at any time during their storied history, but many of the them came to Nebraska to play positions other than receiver.

However, some haven't, and the Cornhuskers, despite running a multiple option offense, hit the road in search of the best wide receiver they can find. True he won't catch 10 balls a game out of the Husker option attack, but he might consistently draw single coverage and have an opportunity to score a touchdown every game, which appeals to more wide receiver types than one might think.

One of the best wide receivers on the Cornhuskers' board still remains. One of the few players in the state of Nebraska who has not committed to the Huskers at this point, **Ty Gifford** (6-0, 186, 4.6) of Lincoln (Southeast), Neb., is considered by most as the top player in Nebraska this season. A gifted skill athlete, Gifford plays wide receiver, running back, cornerback and returns both punts and kicks for a Southeast team that went 13-0 and won a state title a year ago. They are favored once again, thanks in part to Gifford's versatility and game breaking ability.

"Ty is one of the smartest players I have ever had the pleasure of working with," said Southeast coach Chuck Mizerski. "He's very quick, always knows his assignment and those of the players around him as well. He is like playing with a coach on the field. He can accelerate away from people and catches the ball well no matter where it is thrown. Ty has only one dropped pass thus far during his entire career, and he's just a player that you can count on doing his job over and over again."

Gifford still hasn't committed to the Huskers, despite the fact that he has a tremendous amount of respect for the program. There is no question that the Nebraska is

REP REPORT

Keeping Up With COLBY FREEMAN

I REALLY CAN'T explain how great a privilege it is to play for my dad. I really think if you ask any player on our team, he would tell you he wishes he could be doing just what I am doing. I am around my dad all the time, and it is a great situation. I enjoy my relationship with my dad and my mom. We are a very close family and to go to school with my dad is something that has worked out really well for me.

Somehow my dad has been able to still be my dad, while also being a teacher and my coach. I don't think that is easy for him, but he has managed to do it. He can work all day and get on me pretty good at practice, but then when we get home, he can turn it off and be my dad. He never brings it home. In fact, it's me that sometimes wants to bring football home, and he always somehow manages to get me to relax and forget about it.

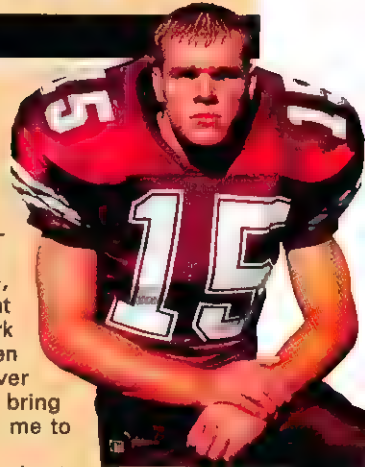
My mom is very good in this area, too. She has a sense about her that just seems to know when things are just getting too tight around the house. Heck, she has been married to my dad for a long time, so she understands what happens during a football season and what kind of tension that can bring. Of course we have won a lot more than we have lost, so it can also bring a lot of happiness too, but at Brownwood if you don't win a championship, then everybody is disappointed. That's when the mom and pop skills really come through at home.

I hope that someday I can be a coach just like my dad. Dad told me that he wants me to go to college, and since I am hopefully going to be able to go to a good college, he wants me to get a degree, and then he said for me to come back and get everything that I need to do that. He wants me to get a degree to get into business or to get into something other than coaching. However, I don't see myself being anything other than a coach someday, because that is what I have always been around.

In fact, I really don't like my dad always trying to talk me out of it. I just can't imagine ever wanting to be away from football. I have to be involved in the game in more of a direct manner. I have to be either playing or coaching — it's that simple. It's in my blood and I can't see that changing any time soon.

Things are really going well with our football team. We are 1-1 right now and really playing well. We are running the ball better than we ever have, and we have always been a really good running football team.

Recruiting is still the same. My dad has asked all college coaches not to call us until after the season. He sent letters to all the schools who had called us back in May, and thus far, nobody has broken that rule. We still get mail from schools, but no personal contact. We want to do things this way because we feel we have a great chance to win a state title and don't want to do anything that would distract from our goal. I am still interested in the same schools: Texas, Texas A&M and Nebraska, with UCLA and Tennessee as possibilities. I really don't see that changing — at least until I start taking phone calls again. ■ — **As told to James Hale**



Colby FREEMAN

Throughout the 1998 football season, Huskers Illustrated will chronicle the recruiting process of Brownwood quarterback Colby Freeman, one of the top prospects in Texas.

his favorite school, but Gifford still wants to check out all his options.

"I really like Nebraska's program, coaches and everything about Nebraska," said Gifford. "If I had to make a choice right now I would prob-

ably go there right now. However, I don't have to make a decision this early, and I want to see how my senior year goes to evaluate what all my options are going to be. I am looking for a great all-around school that is not only great in football, but in academics as well. Nebraska is super in both categories, but they aren't the only great university that is playing football. They are way out in front, but I just want to check out some other universities to see what they have to offer as well."

Michigan appears to the Huskers' biggest challenger at

Early Birds

These players have given Nebraska verbal non-binding commitments.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	40	High School
Josh Davis	TB	6-0	194	4.4	Loveland, Colo.
Ryon Bingham	DT	6-4	260	5.0	Sandy (Alta), Utah
Rob Blomeier	QB/DB	6-0	194	4.5	Lancaster (Manheim Township), Pa.
Judd Davies	FB	6-1	238	4.7	Omaha (Millard North), Neb.
Taylor Gehman	FS	6-0	190	4.5	Omaha (Northwest), Neb.
Chris Loos	OL	6-3	275	5.4	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.
Phil Peetz	DT	6-2	250	4.9	Elkhorn, Neb.

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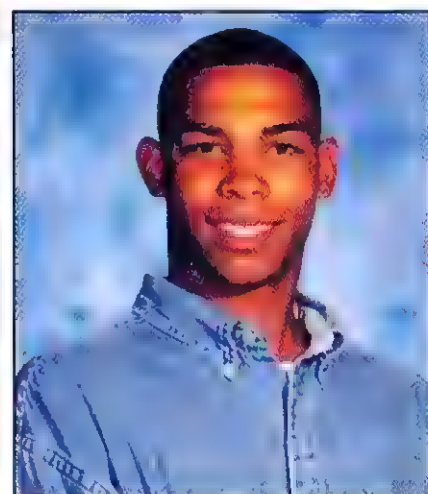
GO BIG RED!



this point, but Notre Dame and Colorado State have also offered visits.

Also in-state, Nebraska is still looking at **Michael Brooks** (6-0, 180, 4.5) of Omaha (Brownell), Neb. Another jack of all trades, Brooks rushed for 1,192 yards and 19 touchdowns a year ago while also catching 23 passes for 522 yards and seven touchdowns. He's not a bad free safety either, coming up with 81 solo stops, 57 assisted, one sack and one interception last season. Brooks is looking at Iowa, Purdue, New Mexico State and Nebraska.

Eric Hill (6-0 1/2, 180, 4.4) of Denver (Montbello), Colo., is a super athlete who the Cornhuskers had a chance to evaluate during their summer football camp. Hill has been the



Ty Gifford of Lincoln (Southeast) likes Nebraska, but he is still keeping his options open.

ultimate team player at Montbello, starting at wide receiver during his sophomore year, but doubling as a back-up tailback and free safety last season.

Now, he's back in the starting line-up at receiver to show off his 10.65 100-meter dash and 21.9 sprinters' speed in the 200. He also has incredible strength, as his 290 bench and 370 squad attest. Nebraska loves Hill's pure athletic ability, and because he was at their camp, they know him better than most. In return, Hill was able to take a close look at Nebraska and came away with a great impression.

"I went to the Nebraska camp and I was very impressed how they handled people," said Hill. "They had so many players at their camp, parents and family, yet they handled everybody with such class and treated us all very special. I really enjoyed the camps and everything about their program. I

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know they are primarily a running football team, but they have thrown more in recent years and I can live with getting one-on-one coverage every time I come to the line of scrimmage. So, there are some advantages to playing wide receiver at Nebraska."

Hill currently has Nebraska as his leading school over Colorado State and Iowa.

Shaun McDonald (5-9, 170, 4.4) of Phoenix (Shadow Mountain), Ariz., is another potential game breaker who the Cornhuskers would love to place in their offense. An incredibly explosive player, McDonald is a dynamic skill player who caught 47 passes a year ago for 900 yards and six touchdowns, rushed for another 899 yards at 14.3 yards per carry and returned four kick offs for touchdowns.

Sounds a little like Johnny Rodgers doesn't he?

McDonald has received several scholarship offers to this point and admitted that he will take a very close look at the Nebraska program before he makes his decision.

"I really like the Nebraska offense and what it can do for a player with my abilities," said McDonald. "Their coaches are also great to talk with, and I have always been a big Nebraska fan. I want to check them out to see what they have to offer."

Arizona State, Nebraska, Washington, Iowa, Oregon and California are his top choices.

In Texas, **Terrance Calhoun** (5-11, 185, 4.4) of Austin (Reagan) has great speed and outstanding athletic ability to work with. Calhoun rushed for 890 yards, caught 19 passes and returned one punt and three kickoffs for scores. Calhoun is looking at Michigan, LSU, Texas, Nebraska and Kentucky.

O.J. McClintock (6-3, 195, 4.65) of Round Rock (Westwood), Texas, is a super athlete who is playing quarterback this season but has said that he wants to be a wide receiver in college. McClintock played running back and wide receiver as a junior and had over 2,200 yards in total offense. McClintock says that Michigan, Nebraska, LSU, Texas, Kansas and Baylor are the leading contenders for his services.

Jon Matthews (5-11, 175, 4.4) of Morgan City (Central Catholic), La., can really fly. He plays on both sides of the ball and excels in special teams. Matthews currently lists Nebraska, Texas A&M, Louisiana Tech and LSU as his top choices. ■

CAMPUS LIFE

As Seen Through The Eyes Of Kyle Vanden Bosch

ACCORDING TO HIS FATHER, Kyle Vanden Bosch has been ultra-intense about football since grade school.

"I remember Kyle wouldn't drink any pop as a kid," said Doug Vanden Bosch. "I guess he heard pop cuts down on your wind. He still doesn't drink any of it."

The younger Vanden Bosch, a 6-foot-4, 260-pound sophomore, is extremely demanding of himself, said Cornhusker rush ends coach Nelson Barnes.

"Some say he's too wound up, too intense, but that's his personality, that's what drives him," Barnes said.

The Larchwood, Iowa, native is listed behind Chad Kelsay on the left side. Vanden Bosch also played the right side when Nebraska beat Louisiana Tech because Mike Rucker was limited by his recurring groin injury.

Vanden Bosch recorded three tackles against Tech, most notably a 13-yard sack in the fourth quarter.

"As the game went along, I felt more comfortable," Vanden Bosch said. "Last season, I was more tentative. This year, I'm taking the approach that if I mess up, I'll do it while going 100 percent."

A highly touted recruit, Vanden Bosch played in every game as a true freshman last season and recorded 21 tackles, including nine solos.

Older Nebraska players teased Vanden Bosch about his tough-guy demeanor.

"It always seemed like he had a frown on his face, like he was going to kick someone's butt," Kelsay said. "We've loosened him up quite a bit."

Vanden Bosch said he understands the need for levity.

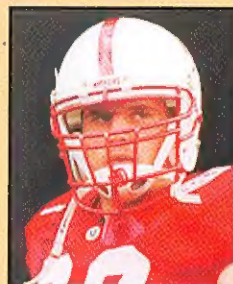
"Last season if I'd mess up, I'd take it real hard and carry it with me for two or three plays," he said. "I'm getting better, but I'm my own worst critic. I feel that's the way you want to be if you're going to be successful."

Vanden Bosch received scholarship offers from several schools, including Iowa and Iowa State. Larchwood (population 740), in the northwest corner of Iowa, is "a big Hawkeye town," Doug Vanden Bosch said.

"One thing about me, I don't like to lose," said Vanden Bosch, who once made 19 tackles in a high school game despite separating his shoulder on the third play. "With the unbelievable record here, I couldn't pass it up."

Rucker's groin soreness may lead to increased playing time for Vanden Bosch. Whatever happens, Vanden Bosch will go full bore.

"He's a kid who's wired," Nebraska defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said. "Sometimes, he's a little out of control, but I think he's headed in the right direction. He can be as good as any rush end we've had around here." ■ — *As told to Steve Sipple*



Kyle VANDEN BOSCH

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Nothing Controversial About Husker Quarterbacks

With Bobby Newcombe on the bench, Eric Crouch and Monte Christo have proven that Frank Solich has three reliable quarterbacks



Mike BABCOCK

QUARTERBACK CONTROVERSY?

What quarterback controversy?

"I think the quarterback controversy was last spring," Eric Crouch said during Nebraska's weekly news conference on the Tuesday before the first road game at California.

"That's over with now. We're just focusing on trying to get prepared each week."

Crouch was responding to a question based on his performance as Bobby Newcombe's replacement during the Cornhuskers' 38-7 victory against Alabama-Birmingham.

Newcombe was held out of the game because of a slight tear in his left posterior cruciate ligament.

It appeared, however, that he would be able to return to play against California.

"Hopefully, we can get into his head a little bit and intimidate him," California linebacker Sekou Sanyika said beforehand.

As it turned out, Sanyika was playing mind games with the wrong quarterback. For the second week in a row, Crouch started. And for the second week in a row, the redshirt freshman led Nebraska to victory as Newcombe watched from the sideline.

Newcombe wore a knee brace he'll probably wear for the remainder of the season, even though "it seems to maybe irritate him," Cornhusker coach Frank Solich said.

Solich's comments early in the week seemed to indicate Newcombe would be able to return to action.

By week's end, however, Crouch was named the starter, with fifth-year senior Monte Christo and sophomore walk-on Jay Runty in reserve.

Solich could take all four quarterbacks because of a more generous non-conference travel roster.

Nebraska's pre-game notes indicated that as of noon that day, it appeared Newcombe might be available but that the situation was "wait and see." When Crouch came out of the game late in the third quarter because of a sore hamstring, however, Christo replaced him.

California had just kicked a field goal to cut the lead to 14-3.

But Christo provided enough offensive stability to complete Nebraska's third consecutive victory, even throwing a 5-yard touchdown pass to wingback Shevin Wiggins with 3:54 remaining in the game.

"When we got that touchdown pass, I was really excited," said Christo, who finished with 9-of-12 pass completions for 106 yards.

"Hopefully all the things I've been through, all the time I've put in, is paying off."

Christo, who walked on from Kearney High, has been plagued by injuries throughout his career. His problem hasn't been lack of ability, said Solich. It's been staying healthy.

Even against California he was less than 100 percent. His right thumb, which has been operated on twice, was stepped on soon after he went into the game, and "it was a little difficult hanging onto the ball," he said.

Christo, whose thumb was wrapped in ice afterward, "had a feeling in the back of my mind I was going to play. I figured there was a chance," he said.

Scott Bruhn



Despite the fact that he has led Nebraska to victory in each of the last two games, Eric Crouch insists that there is no quarterback controversy.

Crouch started the game with a sore hamstring, which tightened up on him at halftime.

"When we came in for halftime, Eric told me he was really sore," said Christo.

Crouch got the Cornhuskers off to a good start, directing and capping a seven-play, 67-yard touchdown drive on their first possession.

He added a six-play, 64-yard touchdown drive early in the second quarter, finishing it off with a 3-yard run. The hamstring was wrapped at halftime, and he

stretched it out.

But after two series in the second half, he told Solich of the increased soreness, providing Christo with his opportunity.

Solich said Newcombe had been given medical clearance to play in an "emergency situation," which meant that if he were the only healthy quarterback, he could have played.

Had he gone in, he would have been limited in what he did, however. "He would have just turned around and pitched it," Solich said.

Christo was prepared mentally to replace Crouch. But "it's not as easy as people think it might be," he said of coming off the bench. "It takes a little time to adjust."

Solich was asked what he told Christo before sending him into the game. "I didn't say much. As I'm finding out, there's not much time," Solich replied.

Three games into the season, Solich has three quarterbacks with meaningful experience.

But there is no quarterback controversy. ■



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